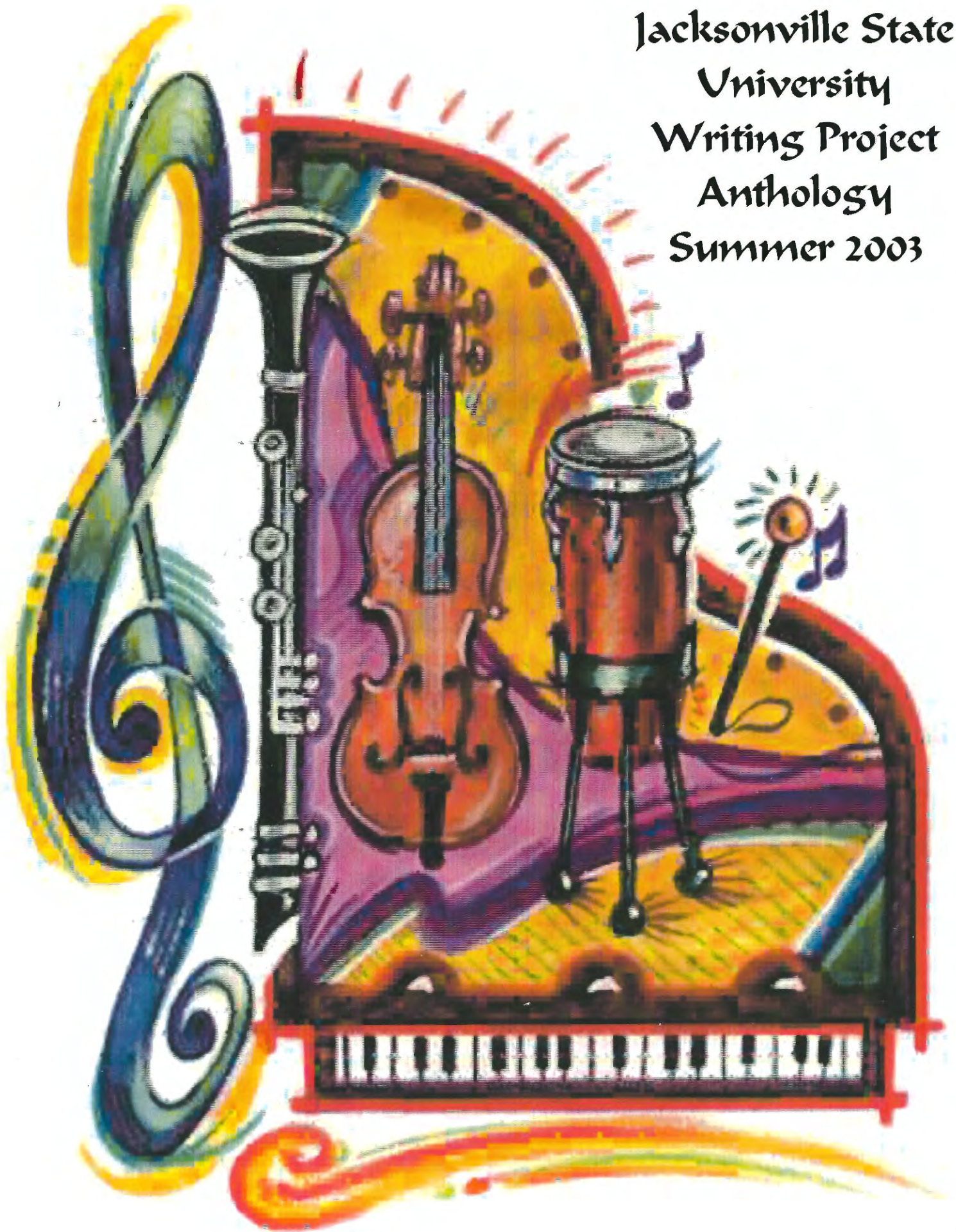


Jacksonville State
University
Writing Project
Anthology
Summer 2003



Jacksonville State University Writing Project Anthology

Summer 2003

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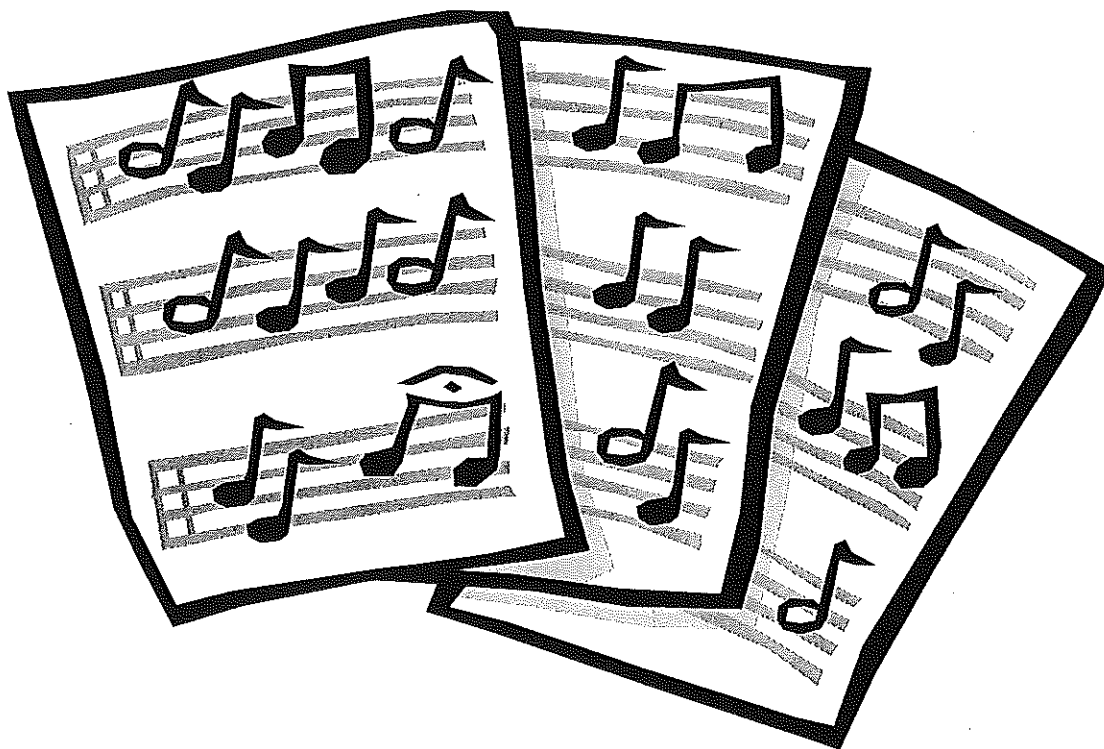
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Dedication

The Teacher Fellows of the JSU Writing Project Summer Institute 2003 would like to dedicate this year's Anthology to **Nia Cox**. Throughout this summer institute, your courage and perseverance have been an inspiration to us all.



I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony. –The New Seekers

Foreword

On July 1, 2003, Maestros Lisa Williams, Gloria Horton, and Lisa Light assembled a chorus of enthusiastic teachers prepared to sing. Songs were instructed and practiced. The dynamics of our voices together became our inspiration for new songs.

As we began, measures of tunes, both adagio and allegro, inspired us as we wrote. Choir members sang lovely cantatas about their lives. Songs of professionalism and writing rang out with gusto. Response groups became harmonious within these few short weeks. Demonstrations were times for personal melodies about methods that inspired countless creative, personal, professional, and interactive writings and songs. Roundtable discussions were measures with which we pondered our own voices, while journals served as reflections of the lyrics we heard.

With the cadence of the past month concluded, we have seen the cooperative harmony of a new song, optimistic that the tunes we have learned will dance in our memories for years to come. We have been inspired to experiment with innovative techniques and encouraged to write and be willing to sing new songs.

Table of Contents

Dedication

Foreword

2003 Teacher-Fellows	6
Schedule	8
Special Events	9
Response Groups	10
Demonstration Summaries	11

Writing by Participants

Lorrie Cooper	19
Nia Cox	28
Gregory Deupree	34
Rhonda Duncan	43
Joanne Gates	52
Carol Hoggie	58
Gloria Horton	65
LeAnne Jenkins	75
Elizabeth Johnson	82
Amy Kelley	87
Alaina Lett	91
Lisa Light	97
Melissa Marsh	103

Heather Mitchell	105
Cathy Noye	112
Lori Shaffer	117
Janet Smart	125
Terrie Turner	134
Jeff Walls	144
Lisa Williams	153
Shalonda Williams	157
Annotated Bibliographies	166

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Daily Schedule

9:00-9:30	Breakfast, Journals, Announcements, Group Time
9:30-11:00	Teacher Demos
11:00-12:00	Reading/Writing/Research
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-3:15	Response Groups and/or Reading/Writing/Research
3:15-4:00	Roundtable Discussion

Special Events

Tuesday, July 8, 2003

Lunch at "The Barn"

Friday, July 11, 2003

Workshop
Dr. Robin Strain-Bynum
"Curriculum Filtering"

Tuesday, July 15, 2003

Alumni Refresher
Ruth Hooks
"Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing"

Thursday, July 24, 2003

Field Trip
Anniston Museum of Natural History

Tuesday, July 29, 2003

Graduation

JSU Writing Project Response Groups

Group I

Lorrie Cooper
Nia Cox
Amy Kelley
Rhonda Duncan

Group II

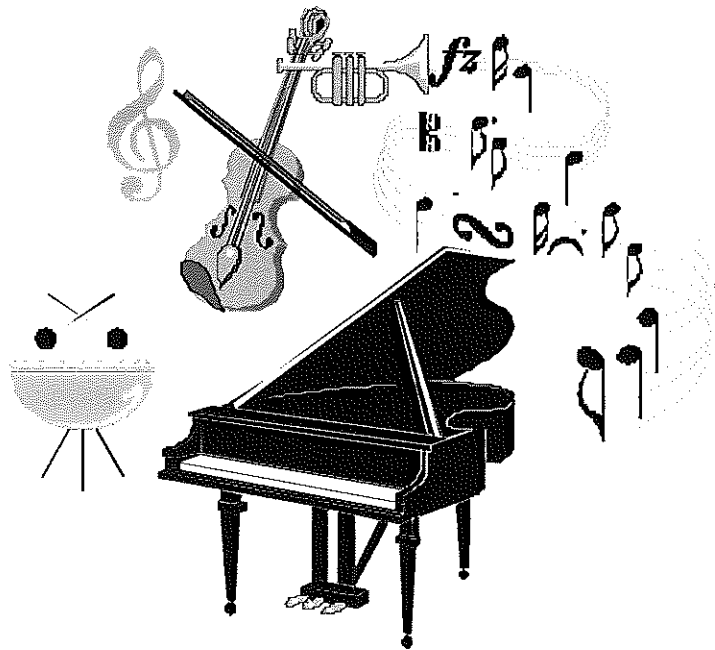
Lori Shaffer
Greg Deupree
Heather Mitchell
Cathy Noye
Janet Smart

Group III

Elizabeth Johnson
Shalonda Williams
Terrie Turner
Alaina Lett

Group IV

Melissa Marsh
Jeff Walls
Carol Hoggle
Leanne Jenkins



Enhancing Literacy: Improving Comprehension and Composition Through a Reading/Writing Connection

According to research compiled by the Alabama Reading Initiative, reading and writing should be integrated to show students that the two skills are closely intertwined; therefore, the focus of this lesson is to improve comprehension and composition through a reading/writing activity. The teacher begins the lesson by reading aloud *You Are Special* by Max Lucado. To help set the purpose for reading, students are provided a story map, a graphic organizer used to identify elements of a story. After the story is read, students work in groups to discuss it. At this point, they are given a list of sentence starters to aid them in their discussion of the literature. After about five minutes, the students meet back to discuss the conversations from their response groups. Next, the teacher and students complete a changing point story map. With this, students identify one character from the story and document the changes that they experience in the book. As a class, the students help the teacher complete a story pyramid using the information from the two previous graphic organizers as well as that from the discussion groups. After the story pyramid is complete, students take the main character, Punchinello, and write an acrostic poem with his name. This aids in the students' comprehension of this character's role in the book. Finally, students are asked to brainstorm ways in which they are special. They choose one of these ways and write it on a yellow star given to them by the teacher. After a mini lesson on paragraph development, students compose a paragraph titled "I Am Special..." They display their paragraphs, stars, and pictures on a quilt titled "We Are Special."

Lorrie Cooper

Breaking the Bounds of Brainstorming: Using the Four-Square Method for Writing

The Four Square Writing Method is a graphic organizer that, through a series of steps, ultimately teaches students the layout of a five-paragraph essay. Designed by Evan and Judith Gould, this method begins by preparing students to write their essays with their main topic, three supporting details, and concluding sentence. The students will then take their three supporting details and add any other relevant information. Next, students add their "connecting words" or transition words. The final step of the process is to add strong verbs, adjectives, and adverbs to the three supporting details. The demonstration also shows how this method can be used backwards so that students may read a five-paragraph essay and then place their information on the four squares. This activity will allow students who are having trouble with the method to fully understand what goes into each square. The Four Square Method breaks the old prewriting tradition with a new and fun-to-use activity that is sure to bring writing scores up, up, up when used correctly!

Nia Cox

Writing Delicious Prose: Descriptive Menus

In this lesson, the teacher tells the students they must make up their own restaurants--any kind they like. Then, students create menus. To be successful, they must make their customers hungry with description. The menus must include (1) a catchy title, (2) a creative cover, (3) appetizers, (4) salads and/or soups, (5) entrees (these will be main courses: seafood, steaks, burgers), (6) desserts, and (7) beverages. Students cannot include alcoholic beverages. The students need to thank their patrons and include their restaurants' addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, websites, and hours of operation. The students can earn extra credit by having kids' sections and/or lunch sections. The following grading rubric works well: 25%--description, 25%--following directions, 25%--spelling and grammar, 25%--creativity (here they can get bonus points). This is a way to get students excited about descriptive writing and provides decorative items to put on the wall for open house.

Gregory Deupree

Creating Cartoons in Secondary Science: A Comical Approach to Discovering Science

Creating Cartoons in Secondary Science is a demonstration based on using cartoons or comics in the classroom to allow students to write creatively. The demonstration opens the door to writing through cartoons in any classroom. Students learn the material of the course while using their scientific knowledge as they write and draw cartoons. This activity creates a different style of learning the content, while creating a positive writing environment for students. The activity can be completed as an individual or group assignment. Writing through cartoons or comic strips is a great way to involve the students in an enjoyable creative writing assignment.

Rhonda Duncan

Let's Plan a Wedding: An Interdisciplinary Lesson Combining History and Literature to Study Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

Using the computer to complete a scavenger hunt and plan a mock wedding is a great way to teach students about Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. First, a class discussion is held on what constitutes a love story. Then, film clips of popular love stories are shown, followed by a discussion of "love at first sight" versus "love that develops over time." Students view the video version of Romeo and Juliet's marriage scene and then break into groups to plan the wedding of the century based on medieval customs as researched on the computer. All findings are presented to the class. Students enjoy

wearing medieval clothing, cooking medieval dishes, and even enacting a mock wedding ceremony.

Carol Hoggle

I Love You This Much: A Valentine's Day Lesson for Writers

I Love You This Much: A Valentine's Lesson for Writers focuses on strategies to help students achieve more specific detail in their writing. Using Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "How Do I Love Thee?" and Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, as well as Theodore Roethke's "Root Cellar" and other poems by student writers, the instructor is able to show how specificity can be achieved through such techniques as simile and metaphor, precise word choice, sensory images, parallel structure, personification, definition, and other similar methods. After a Power Point presentation and class discussion about these techniques, students may choose from three Valentine's Day writing assignments: a "Top Ten Reasons You Are My Valentine" list, a five-paragraph letter modeled on Browning's "How Do I Love Thee," or a "You Are My Valentine" poem, written with metaphors beginning with "You Are...."

Gloria Horton

The Wheels of Life Keep on Turn, Turn, Turning

This lesson involves using music to teach the concepts of parallel structure and balance. As an opening activity, students are required to write a journal entry concerning change and how it affects them. The class then discusses these journal entries and examines the song "Turn! Turn! Turn!" by The Byrds. Students first listen to the song. Then, they compare and contrast the song with Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. The concept of parallel structure is introduced next. The students discuss how parallelism is used in The Byrds' song to reinforce the ideas of balance and constancy. The students then continue with the idea of balance and constancy by focusing on their daily schedules. They draw a pie chart showing how their time is spent. Then they look at these charts and see how they could achieve balance in their day. Finally, the students read a letter of advice by Pete Seeger. They look for any relevance the letter has to their lives today. Next, they write a letter of advice to teens today. In their letters, they need to emphasize balance and the use of parallel structure.

LeAnne Jenkins

Poetry in Motion: Using Poetry to Inspire Creative Writing

This demonstration focuses on the power of using poetry as a springboard for creative writing. Poetry is an excellent way to demonstrate language in unique patterns

and forms. Students are introduced to several poems, participate in activities that relate the poem to their own experiences, and compose original, creative pieces. Through the use of specific poems and activities, an underlying theme of the celebration of children is interwoven throughout the presentation.

Elizabeth Johnson

Finding Song in History

Students love music, so why not use music to motivate students to love poetry, history, and writing? Choose music that students prefer or a song that will appear to be new to them. Allow students to listen to the music with their eyes closed and their minds open. After the music is played, allow students to freely write their thoughts and opinions about what they heard. Then, discuss the history surrounding the song. After creating a time line, distribute the written lyrics and instruct them to label as many literary/poetic elements as possible (literary elements are discussed in previous lessons). Next, the teacher should lead a class discussion about the lyrics, discussing the historical, social, and literary qualities. Last, provide a choice of writing assignments: research and write about the historical elements, write a lyrical narrative, research the social connotations, or write and perform a song while working within cooperative groups.

Amy Kelley

Practice Using Voice

Practice Using Voice uses various techniques to introduce students to their individual writing styles. Using Care Bears as examples, each student draws an object that represents his or her personality and then writes a paragraph explaining why this object was chosen. This helps teachers to remember students' names and introduces the concept of student differences: ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, age, gender, etc. Teachers should constantly remind students that their writing styles are distinct. No two students write alike, nor should they. Also, students work in groups, adding a collaborative voice to revise sample paragraphs. Next, students work in groups to develop personal writings about "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" by Katherine Anne Porter. These types of writings are later used to reflect on the reading assignment and stimulate class discussion about the larger issues within this and other stories.

Alaina Lett

**Sketch to Stretch:
Getting the Most from a Reading/Writing Connection**

This demonstration focuses on ways to integrate the reading and writing connection before, during, and after reading strategies. Students are provided with a booklet or paper to record various information obtained from a guided reading lesson. For this lesson, the students read a picture book entitled *Sweet Dried Apples: A Vietnamese Wartime Childhood* by Rosemary Brickler. "Before-reading activities" include visualizing, illustrating, descriptive writing, and predicting. "During-reading activities" include guided reading instruction, discussion, and writing reflections recorded in the booklet. After reading, more opportunities are given for writing, reflection, discussion, self-evaluation, and art connections. This entire activity takes place over a period of one week's class sessions. The Sketch to Stretch activity holds students accountable for their learning and reflection. It also serves as a means for students to remain active rather than passive during the reading process. This strategy easily adapts to any content area, most topics, and grade levels.

Lisa Light

**Quotation Marks: A Quandary
Mastering Usage Through Collaborative Writing**

First, the proper use of quotation marks is discussed: when, how, and why we use them. Then, the presentation focuses on the ways dialogue is written. Examples of plays, comic strips, and narratives are shown, and the differences in these types of dialogue writing are discussed, focusing primarily on narrative writing. Sample questions are placed on the overhead, and students volunteer to add the correct punctuation (especially quotation marks). Then, students are divided into groups of two, and each person is given a "person card," while each group is given an "object card." The group must write a narrative using dialogue about their person and object. Students are given the option of making a storyboard, drawing a cartoon, or acting out the narrative in a short skit. Students are later given time to revise their stories, and all work is displayed in the classroom.

Melissa T. Marsh

Descriptive Writing: Four Elements of Success

It is important to teach the four modes of writing to today's children. This lesson focuses on the descriptive writing mode. Four key elements are looked at: the use of figurative language, strong verbs, adjectives, and sensory details. The two researched components are scaffolding and cooperative learning groups. First, the teacher activates the students' prior knowledge with a paper organizer. The students are to fold their paper

into fourths and in each section list what they already know about the four modes. Next, the teacher shows an example essay written in the descriptive mode, which evolves from Rick Shelton's *Write Where You Are*. The students, as a class, identify components within the essay that are elements of descriptive writing. Then, the scaffolding technique is used as the teacher demonstrates a holiday poem using the five senses. After an example is shown to the students, the class composes one. Following the class poem, the students are paired and expected to choose a different holiday and write one together. At this time, the students are assigned an individual poem. Finally, the class is divided into four cooperative groups. Each group is assigned one of the four elements. The assignments include reading/writing connections, illustrations, and descriptive writing elements. After these assignments are completed, the groups share their activity and final products with the whole group.

Heather Mitchell

It's All in the News: Teaching *Beowulf* Through Journalistic Writing

The newspaper is printed daily; therefore, it is an important source of information in my classroom. Because my school gets a sponsored subscription of *The Birmingham News*, I try to incorporate some newspaper genre activities in my lesson plans. I find that my students really enjoy reading the newspaper more than reading from the literature books, so I incorporate the newspaper format as an aid to teaching English literature.

After reading and discussing *Beowulf* with my students, I place them in groups. Next, I assign each group a particular battle to focus their newspaper on and give them a list of specific things that their edition must have. Finally, I give them the time and space to be as creative as they want to be.

This activity is an excellent way to teach several of the writing modes. For example, the lead story must be written in expository form. The advertisements must use the descriptive/persuasive form, and the editorials must use the persuasive form. Because this is a newspaper edition, all of the students must do their part for the paper to be a success. Research shows that students learn and comprehend more when there is a reading/writing connection, and this activity supports this research in every aspect.

Cathy Noye

At the Movies: Using Movies to Teach Effective Dialogue Writing

After a brief review of dialogue writing format (both in drama and prose), the students will view a short muted video scene. They are to watch the scene in its entirety and write what they believe the actors are saying in dramatic format. After viewing the scene, the teacher will ask the students to read aloud what they have written. The teacher will then ask them why they chose to write what they did and also define a brief list of literary terms for the scene, such as setting, plot, mood, tone, etc. Students usually have

no difficulty accomplishing either of these tasks. The teacher will then discuss with the class the difference between drama and prose. Drama is meant to be seen, so many literary aspects can be shown visually. Prose, however, is meant to be read, so writers must show through their text the setting mood, and tone, rather than simply telling what these things are. The teacher will emphasize the use of strong verbs and adjectives and also help any student who is having trouble getting started.

Lori H. Shaffer

I Think; Therefore I Own

This demonstration is a way to generate a type of class discussion that engenders ownership of the literature. First, the teacher reads a selection, twice if it is brief. Next, the teacher distributes slips of paper on which are written open-ended questions, each worth one point to be added to the daily grade; the questions have no right or wrong answers but are constructed to relate to students' daily experiences, opinions, and attitudes. The teacher tries to look for characteristics in the work that will lead to discussions about issues of morality, good citizenship, culture, and quality of life in the modern world. In this type of discussion, the students arrive at their own assessment of the themes related to the piece. The discussions are often the source of essay items on exams.

Janet L. Smart

ABC Autobiographies

This lesson is an alternative way for students to write autobiographies. It is designed to motivate students to write in great detail about themselves by choosing one topic relevant to them for each letter of the alphabet. To introduce this lesson, the teacher reads aloud to the students a sample paragraph from his or her own autobiography. Then, the class brainstorms together to list possible topics for the first six letters of the alphabet. Students then write one paragraph for each letter of the alphabet, describing or explaining something about themselves that begins with that letter. When all 26 paragraphs are completed and proofread, students may then type, print, and even illustrate a copy to be graded and a copy to keep for themselves.

Terrie L. Turner

Revising Without an Eraser

The purpose of this demonstration is to look at revision as a continuation of the writing process. The key concept driving the demonstration is that true revision cannot be separated from the writing itself. The revision of a paragraph emphasizing strong verbs includes a demonstration of the use of "the bell" and "did-it dots" as immediate and

specific feedback to students. The importance of providing students with the opportunity to look at their work in a reflective and questioning manner is highlighted in an additional writing activity.

Jeff Walls

Journal Writing: Effective Strategies in the Classroom

This demonstration gives teachers innovative ways to use journals in the classroom. Journal writing is a writing process that can be used at all grade levels in a variety of content areas. Journal writing connects reading and writing, gives students the opportunity to express themselves creatively, builds vocabulary, and assesses grammar usage and comprehension skills. Journals are developed from the GIST (Generating Interaction Between Reader and Text) and response group writing activities.

Shalonda Williams



Lorrie Cooper

What counts is not the number of hours you
put in, but how much you put in the hours.

Anonymous

A Hero in Disguise

Part One

“Can we keep her, Mama? Please, please, please!”

“I don’t know, Becky. A dog is a lot of responsibility.” I didn’t know how Mama could resist the animal that sat so innocently at her feet staring at her as though she might be his only remaining hope.

“But Mom, I promise I’ll take good care of him.”

“Becky, do you know how much trouble a dog can be? Especially one his size.”

As though she had offended him, the big dog with the beautiful flowing blonde hair sprang to his feet, cocked his ears, and tilted his head in Mom’s direction. “Oh, don’t look at me that way,” Mom said to the dog in a voice that I knew was weakening.

“Mama, just think. Having a dog will teach me so much responsibility. I can feed him, bathe him, walk him, and even teach him cool tricks!” With this, the scraggly looking stray glanced back and forth at my mom and me, and I would almost swear he understood everything we were saying. Then, as though to sweeten the deal, he leaped up on my mother’s lap and gave her a great big, sloppy kiss. And with a look from the dog that could have coined the phrase “puppy dog eyes,” she hesitantly responded, “Well, how can I resist that?”

Tears filled my eyes as I grabbed my new best friend and gave him a gigantic bear hug. He responded with a yelp as though he were celebrating, too.

That was twelve years ago, and I’ve never been more grateful that my mom gave in to that abandoned, beautiful golden retriever. Who would have ever dreamed that the

stray my mom reluctantly agreed to take in would some day become my child's saving grace?

Part Two

"Hey, Mom, watch this." I smiled at the red-faced child as he got a running start and cannonballed off the pier. Justin, my son, would be four next week, and he was truly the daredevil of the family. He had learned to swim at a very young age. My husband was convinced that we would someday see him competing in the Olympics.

As the small head with bright red hair came bobbing up from the water, his eyes met mine, searching for approval. "What d'ya think, Mom? Cool, huh?" Justin had always seemed to be much further ahead of other children his age. He learned to crawl, walk, and speak long before the children of some of my friends; therefore, seeing him doing this type of trick at the young age of four wasn't surprising.

"Yes, Honey. You look just like Superman, but please don't jump so close to the edge of the pier. We don't need any cracked heads spoiling our weekend."

"Yes ma'am." With that, Justin decided to bring an end to his brave excursions and opted to happily splash around in the water while I continued to sunbathe and relax on the pier with our dog, Balto. Even though he was twelve and had just been diagnosed with arthritis by his long-time vet, Dr. Morgan, Balto was, or tried to be, as active as ever. All that mattered to us was that he was as much a part of the family as anyone else.

"Here, Balto, here, boy." As though he had just been struck by lightning, Balto bolted up from his reclining position and pounced into the water. Justin giggled with delight as a big splash drenched his already soaked body.

In the distance, we heard a pleasant interruption to our morning activities.

“Honey, lunch is ready.” I couldn’t believe it was already lunchtime until the gentle rumble of my stomach reminded me that it must be so. I could hear the faint sound of my husband’s voice calling from the cabin where I had spent every summer for as long as I could remember. This log bungalow had been in my family for years, and I was happy now to share it with my own.

Justin and Balto erupted from the water like lava from a volcano. “Come on, boy. I’ll race ya!” Balto was eager to oblige but wasn’t quite as quick about it as I remember his being when I made the same request as a child.

“Dad, I’m starving,” Justin gasped as he came to a sudden halt beside the flaming grill. The smell of plump, juicy hot dogs filled the air, reminding me of those barbeques I spent with Mom and Dad as a child. Balto stood beside Justin, tail wagging and patiently awaiting his share of the meal as though the hot dogs had miraculously become T-bone steaks. “Don’t worry, boy, you can have some of mine.” With what seemed to be a smile on his face, he retreated over to the picnic table and waited for his young friend.

“Thanks for doing the cooking, Hon’l. It was nice to just sit down by the pier and relax for a while.”

“No problem. Actually there’s something manly about bursting open a bag of charcoal and firing up the grill.” I couldn’t help but smile to myself, as the comment my husband just made was so typical of his demeanor. He was 100% man: football, beer, grills, cars, or anything else usually considered stereotypical of men. All this aside, he was a wonderful man. I couldn’t have asked for a more loving husband or father for

Justin. Actually, he reminded me very much of my own father.

It didn't take long for Justin to grab a couple of warm hot dogs and run over to the table to join Balto. I, on the other hand, took this opportunity to slip an arm around my husband's waist and discuss our afternoon plans. "So, how do you feel about spending a quiet afternoon of reading and lounging around being lazy?"

"Sounds great to me. I would love to go for a walk and enjoy some Mother Nature." I could sense the relief in my husband's voice. After all, he was a busy man who normally spent long days in the city hard at work.

As we finished our lunch, we all went our separate ways. Justin and Balto amazingly crashed on a blanket just inside the cabin. My husband journeyed into the woods to enjoy his hike, and I curled up on the porch with a book I couldn't wait to finish. All seemed right with the world. Little did I know this would be the last peace our family would enjoy for quite some time.

Part Three

I'm not sure at what point I dozed off, but I awoke to a sound that I couldn't quite make out. At first, I thought I was dreaming. I sat up in the wicker rocking chair that I had somehow turned into a cozy bed for my nap. As I rose to a sitting position, I watched the book that I'd had such good intentions of finishing fall to the floor of the wooden porch. "I can't believe I fell asleep," I muttered to myself. As I stumbled to the door to check on Justin and Balto, I heard that strange noise once again. "What is that?" I thought to myself. I opened the squeaky screen door to look in on my sleeping child and made a

chilling realization...he wasn't there, and neither was Balto. Panic set in as I heard the desperate sound again, only this time it was perfectly clear. Justin was in trouble.

I turned my stiff body toward the lake. My heart fell to the ground, and my mouth felt as though I had been chewing on cotton. I bolted out the door, letting it slam behind me. I ran as fast as I could toward the lake, although I felt I was hardly moving. When I found myself standing just feet from the edge of the water, I could clearly hear the gurgling noises and pleas for help erupting from my precious child. My legs grew numb, and I found I was having trouble breathing. All I could see was my son's red hair barely visible in the water that seemed so far away. Then, I heard it...silence. I know one doesn't usually hear "silence," but it was the most disturbing sound I had ever heard. The gurgling had stopped, and all I noticed was the pool of blood that encircled Justin's head. No more wailing of arms, pleas for help...nothing. I was frozen with shock. Then, out of nowhere, as though he sensed my helplessness, Balto jumped into the water and latched onto the T-shirt Justin was wearing. I can remember silently thanking God for giving me the good sense to make him wear that shirt due to the excessive sun he had gotten the day before. As Balto dragged Justin from the water, I heard my husband speed past me and greet Balto at the edge of the water. I don't know what happened but my paralysis suddenly ended, and I stepped back into reality.

As my husband lugged Justin's limp body back toward the house, I ran to get the car. I frantically drove to the hospital while my husband sat holding pressure to Justin's head. Justin didn't move...he was unconscious. We made it to the hospital on a wing and a prayer because I certainly do not remember driving there. As I flew into the emergency

room parking lot on two wheels, I slowed the vehicle as I approached the entrance. My husband did not wait for the car to stop before he jumped out and bolted through the emergency room door. I parked the car and sprinted inside the hospital.

When I entered the waiting area, I found my husband, face soaked in tears, shirt drenched with blood, waiting on a bench.

“What happened, Becky?”

I began trying to explain the tragic events that I had just witnessed, including the panic-stricken fear that had enveloped my body. I told him everything. I explained to him the dream I thought I was having, Balto’s heroic efforts...everything. I couldn’t help but sense the blame that I knew he was silently placing on me. Or, was it the blame I was placing on myself that I was sensing?

We waited for what seemed like hours for news from the doctor. I lost count of the prayers that were sent up to save my son. A horrible thought suddenly crept into my mind: What would my life be like without Justin? NO! I refused to let myself go there. He WOULD make it! My beautiful, vibrant little boy who just hours ago was so full of life would survive because I would not allow him to leave me.

Part Four

The time that we spent waiting on the doctor was almost unbearable. I spent that time making recollections of Justin and how happy my husband and I had been when we found out that I was pregnant. It had been both of our dreams to have a family right away. We began trying right after we were married and were disappointed when it didn’t happen right away.

“Don’t worry, Honey. The doctors say there’s no reason we aren’t pregnant yet. It’ll happen. Just give it time.” I could still hear the soothing words of my husband as though it were yesterday. How I longed to hear something consoling from him now. I wish he’d tell me that everything was going to be fine, but he didn’t. The truth was he didn’t know if it would be...neither of us did.

“Mr. and Mrs. Nolan...” A strong, very professional-sounding voice brought me back to reality. My husband and I sprang to our feet, eyes wide, and faces full of anticipation.

“How’s Justin? Is he going to be okay? When can we see him?” I flooded the doctor with my questions. I was anxious to hold my precious little boy once again and tell him that everything was going to be just fine. I knew how scared he must be.

“Mrs. Nolan, your son had a pretty serious head injury. We managed to get the bleeding stopped and stitches in his head, but he is still unconscious and is considered critical.”

That’s the point at which I lost it. I couldn’t help it. I burst into tears, and my husband caught me as I sank to my knees in despair.

“Mrs. Nolan, Justin needs you to be strong right now. He’s going to need lots of care and encouragement.”

I managed to pull myself together as my husband took hold of my shoulders and made my eyes meet his. “Justin needs you to be strong, and so do I.” With that, I knew I had to hold it together. As I regained my composure, my husband and I marched into Justin’s room like soldiers ready for battle where I continued to stay for the next three

days.

When Justin finally awoke, I felt as though a heavy weight had been lifted from my shoulders. When his eyes opened, a sweet, innocent smile warmed his pale face. “Mommy, where’s Balto?” I couldn’t help but laugh to myself. Here we were worried to death, and the first words out of his mouth sounded like something he would ask upon awakening from a long nap, not unconsciousness. I rushed out to find my husband. We hugged and cried...then hugged and cried some more. As we retreated back to Justin’s room to explain to him the extent of his injuries, he then confirmed our suspicions of what we already knew to be true. He didn’t want to bother me while I was sleeping, so he had decided to go swimming without me. In his attempt to master a new trick off the pier, he had hit his head and couldn’t manage to pull himself back up to get help. The doctor found it amazing that he could even remember this much so quickly.

Several hours later, the doctors confirmed that Justin would be fine. He would be able to eventually go back to being the happy, carefree daredevil that he had been before the accident.

It was, however, quite a while before Justin was allowed to go home, but the day he did was a delight for us all. The car didn’t get to the driveway before Balto came bounding toward it. It was as though he could sense Justin’s presence in the car. Justin jumped out and greeted his hero with open arms. The two became even more inseparable than ever.

Part Five

The day Balto died was very traumatic for everyone. Although we all knew it was coming, it was still like losing a member of the family. Justin understands that Balto no longer suffers from his arthritis and that he is in a better place where he is free to run and play all day. This doesn't, however, keep him from wishing he'd had more time with him.

My husband decided that the best way to mend Justin's broken heart was to surprise him with...yes, another smaller version of Balto. I smiled to myself as my son came bounding into the room with pleading eyes.

"Can we keep him, Mom? Please, please, please!" I was a little afraid it was too soon. Sensing my reluctance, the hyper puppy jumped up into my lap and greeted me with a wet, sloppy kiss. I heard my mother's voice ring in my ears as I hesitantly responded, "Well, how can I resist that?"



Nia Cox

If you would not be forgotten
As soon as you are dead and rotten
Either write things worth the reading
Or do things worth the writing

Ben Franklin

Assumptions

They always say, "When you have kids..."
Why do they assume
They don't know me
They don't know my situation

I see him holding him
Kissing his head
Wrapped up in his large, lightly freckled arms against
His smooth tiny sausage-link arms
And I wish...
I had more to give

What a great father he'd be
He's so patient, loving, such a good man
And I have so much to teach...
Will it ever be used

It's not the muscular dystrophy I worry about passing on
It's what it will do to me
But then...
Look what it's doing to me now

Around me, others take for granted
"I want two kids"
"We'll wait three years before we start"
Passing pictures around
I smile and act happy for them and I think
"But we'll get married, and then what..."

I need to know how it feels inside
Like butterflies
Such a protected treasure
I want to read to my belly

I imagine how it would feel to look in his eyes
As he smiles with his eyes back at me
And we look down

At

What

We've

Created

A blend of his eyes and mine looking back up

I crave the t-ball games and school plays
Report cards
Teaching morals and values
Teaching, teaching
My OWN

So I'll wait...
And read research...
And pray...
And until then...
I'll ache.

Afraid of a Cough

I heard him cough. That familiar chest-shaking cough that made my heart stop beating every time his shoulders heaved forward. I blocked the thoughts that came rushing to the front of my brain. No, that's not what it is. Not so soon.

We got the phone call at about 6:30 one night.

"Nia, tell your father we need to schedule an appointment to go over his test results," said the nurse at the doctor's office.

Numbness rushed to my fingertips as I loosely held the phone, managing to mumble, "OK." I was sitting in our living room on the '70's-style couch that is a worn golden color. My daddy was looking at me from across the room. I tried to read his eyes. Was he scared? Did I need to play "The Strong One"?

It made me angry! I picked the phone back up and frantically dialed the numbers.

"Dr. Mohan's office," the nurse answered.

"Let me speak to Dr. Mohan," I demanded.

"Who's speaking, please?"

"Listen, this is Nia, and I have to know about those test results tonight. Who cares about a new insurance privacy policy? Ma'am, you don't understand. How can we wait all night? How dare you call my house tonight and ask us to wait? Is my daddy's cancer back or not?"

My father, Jimmy, had been diagnosed with lung cancer the previous year. Our world fell apart because of a six-letter word. Plans were rushed; changes were made--time, now, was in charge.

We had been told that in three months he would start to feel bad, and in six months, other people would start to notice. My daddy, the man that I used to swear could beat up anyone else's Daddy when I was in kindergarten, the man who could lift me high in the air by the straps on the Liberty overalls I wore that matched his, would be reduced in size not only in his body but also in his mind. The doctors said he might die in a year. A year! A year or ten years, it didn't matter. How could one "spot on the lung" determine when my daddy would take his last breath?

The choice had been radiation, and he took it without all the drama that you see on TV. Radiation doesn't cause hair loss or make you weak. It was relatively painless...well, physically, I guess. But inside, our guts wrenched up in our throats, and something clenched down on our hearts and turned them back and forth, literally squeezing the life out of us.

People came to the house and brought cards and food and hugged us. The kind of hugs where you fall over on them and let them hold you up for a while while you let your arms hang like flowers soaked by the heavy rain. It's all as if to say, "Here, you bear this burden for a while." I looked at him there in the next room as my aunt hugged me.

There he sat, my daddy--6'6", 320 pounds, in his white Hanes t-shirt and his cheap faded black Wal-Mart cotton shorts watching a Western he had already seen dozens of times, ignoring all that was going on in the next room. I wanted to scream at those there consoling us, "Look! He's not dead! Why are we acting like he's not even here?"

The grace of God. It's not just a term. That's how we made it through. I could finally rest and give all that weight to someone who could hold it. I talked to Him, I begged Him, and I praised Him when we got word that Daddy's cancer was gone.

So, there I lay, curled in a ball on my right side, with my pillow in my mouth so that no one would hear. A year later, the night of the phone call, knowing what we made it through before, I screamed into the soft cotton that enveloped my face. "Please God, don't take my daddy. Please God, don't take my daddy." I said this over and over again, losing my mind, pulling my hair out at my temples, realizing my hair was soaked with tears. I probably repeated this prayer over and over for an hour. I couldn't think of anything else to say. I needed him to walk me down the aisle. I needed to hear that TV blaring in the living room, and scream, "Daddy, turn down that TV!" I needed to have my daddy who went to Wal-Mart so willingly and asked before he left, "Anybody need any pads?" And so I lay there, screaming into that pillow, praying for peace--- and then, calmness washed over me, and my pain was gone. My fear, my doubt, all of it, gone. It took me by surprise. I smiled, never ceasing to be amazed at God's hand in my life.

Reassurance and faith calmed me as I sat on the couch the next week while my mother told me they had found a spot the size of a half dollar on his lung.

"It's OK," I said.

And so it is now, five months later. Chemo has taken away his hair, and we rub his head and call him "Fuzzy Chicken." As we beg him to eat something, he gasps for breath through the oxygen tube under his nose. He sits at the table with his chin on his chest, mumbling, "I'm just so tired."

But I look at him and smile with confidence and complete faith that he will live.
And that faith has come through again, as they are now taking him off chemo.

"He should be feeling better in 30-60 days when the chemo gets out of his system," the nurses say.

He will be strong enough to walk me down the aisle. And I will beam with pride at this man on my arm, and I will look up towards Him in the Heavens, and I will praise Him once again for these valleys he carries us through and for the mountains where we stand tall and He lets us shine as stars with His light.



Greg Deupree

But words are things, and a small drop of
ink, falling like dew upon a thought,
produces that which makes thousands,
perhaps millions, think

Lord Byron

Cigar

It was the summer of 1964. President Kennedy had just been killed a few months earlier, the Beatles had made their invasion, and I was 9 ½. That half year used to make all the difference, didn't it? We had recently moved from the Florida panhandle to Birmingham, Alabama. When I lived in Florida, we'd played sports in season, but soon after moving to Birmingham, I realized there was only one sport played--football. Both of the state's major college teams were good; Auburn was coached by Ralph "Shug" Jordan, and Alabama was coached by Paul "Bear" Bryant. I had made a few friends in the neighborhood and was learning to play yard football with them.

There were the half-brothers (though they looked nothing alike) Tooter, dark and foreign-looking, and Glenn, red-headed with freckles; "Crying" Chuck Bean, who was sickly looking with long thin arms and a dark brown flattop; Roy Yarborough, with his crooked grin and cowlick; and Pete Langston, who already had facial hair at eleven years old. We played 3-on-3 yard football, making up our own rules: three completions was a first down (no matter how far), and most of us "kicked" by throwing the ball high and deep.

Tooter and Glenn always took opposite sides; they were very competitive. Chuck and I were the slowest, so we were on opposite sides. Then each side would take either Roy or Pete. It was fun pretending to be our heroes-- Joe Namath or Dennis Homan, for the Alabama fans; Tucker Fredrickson or Jimmy Sidle, for us Auburn fans.

One afternoon, we were in the middle of a game. It was one of those hot, still days of Alabama Julys. A wind stirred up from the west, and as my grandmother would say,

"It's clabbering up to rain." But we had a good thirty more minutes to play before the storm hit. "Crying" Chuck caught a pass, and I slammed him hard to the ground. Chuck just sat there and opened his mouth in a large O shape. No teeth showing, just lips over teeth--a wide gaping hole--with no sound. Big tears irrigated his dirt-covered face, but no sound. I'd never seen such a thing. He got up, ran around in a circle like a dog finding a place to sit, and took off for the bushes. Tooter kind of whispered, "He don't like us watching him cry. He'll be back directly."

The rest of us got water from the spigot outside Pete's house. We splashed each other until we had to wring out our t-shirts before putting them back on. Chuck, wiping his tear-stained face, came back over, and we resumed the game. Suddenly, a rumbling sound came from up the street. The source of the rumble was a big old black car. Later, I discovered it was a '48 Oldsmobile.

"Cigar!" everybody but me screamed. Boys went scampering in various directions and into their homes. However, I stood dumbfounded as the black car pulled up to the curb near where I was standing. He had pulled over to the wrong side of the road, so the driver's side was nearer me.

I don't know why I didn't run. I just couldn't. I was frozen. I felt like a frog with a flashlight in my face.

"Hey, boy," the man purred, "c'mere."

Trance-like, I stepped closer to him.

"You're new around here, aren't you?" His lips glistened with saliva at the corners of his mouth. He held an ice pick between his teeth. His graying hair was plastered to his

head. Then the stories that the other boys had told me rushed through my head. It was said he'd killed a girl in the '50's down at Roberts Field, but a crooked lawyer had gotten him off. He had a German shepherd dog that they said he fed the girl to. Roy's sister had been followed home from school one day, and he'd tried to get her to get in his car with him. Pete said he was a zombie (I didn't believe that one). But everybody's parents told us to stay away from him. When we'd ask why, they only said, "Because we're telling you to, that's why."

"You like my girlfriend?" He pointed to an almost life-size doll with glass eyes and a blue ruffled dress sitting in the passenger seat.

I almost responded, "That's not your girlfriend, that's a stupid doll." But he had gotten out of the car without me realizing it.

Cigar stood over me grinning. "You want to go for a ride?"

I stared at my dust-covered PF Flyers, hoping I could make a run for it. Big raindrops were slowly splattering the ground. I could smell his tobacco breath as he stood over me.

"Say, boy. Wanta go for a ride?"

"No," I said and tried to run, but he anticipated my escape and grabbed me by the tail of my t-shirt. He picked me up and flung me into his car. I looked into the doll's lifeless eyes and realized mine might soon be the same. Rain pelted down on Cigar's car. I couldn't see anything through the windshield.

Just then, a flash came toward the car. It was Tooter, the bravest boy I've ever known, kicking Cigar and screaming obscenities. Then the other boys who had been

peering out their windows joined Tooter in his assault on Cigar. I was able to unlock the passenger door and escape to my house.

When the other boys realized I was safe, they scattered to their own houses until Cigar was gone. We didn't call the police or anything because the other boys said they'd never believe us over a grown man. The rain stopped after an hour or so, but we didn't play again that day. Steam rose off the grass and pavement outside like a whistling tea kettle. I heard Tooter and Glenn's dad went to see Cigar later that night. He didn't bother us for a while after that.

Let Go

Sammy removed his sunglasses as he entered The Dugout, a neighborhood sports bar in one of the poorer outskirts of Birmingham, Alabama. The Dugout was one of those bars scattered throughout neighborhoods where men drink bottle beer and watch the game, any game. They shout bets and remember to themselves and others when they were the ones who hit or toted or shot the ball. Sammy looked around the room. The bar's walls were cluttered equally with Auburn and Alabama shrines. There were yellowed headlines telling the stories of games long ago, pictures of Bear Bryant with his hound's tooth hat, with his Alabama cap, and without a hat. There was a dartboard in one corner, and a bumper pool table was in another corner.

"No one's here yet, " Sammy thought as he strode to the bar.

"Gimme a Coors Light, Tommy," he said to the slight man behind the bar.

"Got some here with your name on it, Bubba," Tommy replied. He called everyone Bubba. It kept him from having to remember names. "How was work?" He handed Sammy a beer wet with dew from the cooler.

Sammy ignored the question and took a big gulp of beer and burped almost silently through his nose. "See that Braves game last night? When're they going to give up on ol' Greg Maddox? He looks washed up to me."

Sammy scoped out the rest of the bar. Two older men sat at a table nursing beers and cigarettes near the big screen television. The Cubs and the Cardinals were in the top of the seventh. It was about time for someone to sing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" at Wrigley. By five o'clock or so, the bar would be half-crowded with men who were there

either because there was no one at home--or because there was.

"Yeah, I saw most of it," Tommy replied. "Maddox ain't what he was a couple of years ago, but he may get it right before long. It ain't even the All-Star break yet."

Sammy took another swallow of beer, belching a little louder this time. He wiped his mouth on his fist and caught sight of his reflection in the mirror behind the bar. For the first time, he looked old. His hair had been graying, but now his wrinkles had deepened; his face looked more sallow. "I got let go today."

"Why? You been coming in late again?" Tommy asked while wiping down the bar with a small white towel.

"Naw, I quit that after the last time I got chewed out over a year ago." He picked at the silver label on the beer bottle with his thumbnail. "Said they're downsizing. I kind of saw it coming after we got sold off a few months ago. Twenty-six years. For nothing. I don't know what I'll tell Debbie. She'll pitch a fit."

"I wish I could afford you down here. But I can't even afford Jenny right now. You know how slow it is down here after softball season. We won't pick it back up until the fall. I oughta close between the Fourth and when Alabama kicks off this fall." Tommy had turned Sammy's problem into talking about his own troubles. "You need another one?"

Sammy nodded and drained the spit and suds at the bottom of his beer. "I'll find something, I guess." He took a long pull on the new one and lit a cigarette.

"When'd you start smoking again?"

Sammy took a long draw off the Marlboro and blew out a billow of gray smoke.

"Stopped at Quickee Mart after I left today. Debbie ain't gonna like that, either. I shouldn't *ever* have dropped out of school, huh?"

"Hey, y'all had a baby on the way. You couldn't go to school and play football and get married and be a daddy all at the same time. And Mr. Easter offered you that job right after you kicked that field goal to win the city championship, 'member?"

"Yeah, I should've tried to make college work, but twenty thousand a year was a lot back then."

They both looked at the door where Jenny, fortyish, with almost natural looking auburn hair and a good body for her age, came in dabbing her forehead and neck with a Kleenex. "Tommy, when're you gonna get around to fixing that air conditioner in my car? It's 96 out there. I'm about to die."

Tommy smiled at Jenny, squeezing her forearm, "I can't right now, Sug. Got people to take care of in here."

"Yeah, I can tell," Jenny smirked sarcastically. "It's like Auburn/Alabama Day in here."

"I'll get to it tomorrow. Just bring it over about nine. Thataway I can get to it before it gets so hot." Sammy smiled rubbing Jenny's arm. "You can bring me some breakfast while you're at it. You make some kinda good biscuits."

Jenny smiled, "We'll see. If the kids are behaving, I'll whip some biscuits and bacon up for you. And Mama sent over some peach preserves she put up last week."

Jenny, a mother of three, had been on her own since her husband, Junior, had lit out for

Texas three-and-a-half years ago.

Men, two and three at a time, had begun entering the bar. Jenny, with her tray, strolled around the room taking orders and flirting with the newly arrived customers.

Sammy looked over the bar at Tommy. "How come you don't ask her out? She's still pretty dog-goned good-looking."

"We dated a few times a while back. Boy, she was something in high school, wasn't she?

Sammy nodded, "Hey, she's still pretty good looking."

"Junior snapped her up quick back then," Tommy replied. "But with her working here and all, it just didn't seem a smart thing to do."

Sammy was starting to remember being out of work. "Why couldn't it be like it was for our daddies? Shoot, they made good money over at the steel plant, and they didn't have to go to college. They raised families, and we used to have a place on the river and a boat. There just ain't any jobs out there like that any more."

Tommy grabbed four beers and poured a tequila for Jenny. "Yeah, it stunk around here and it was smoky and all--but folks made a good living. Daddy started this place in the late '50's just for those guys. There was a while when he was open 24 hours a day for the shift workers to come in after work."

"I remember that," Sammy smiled. "We used to come by here and bring your daddy breakfast sometimes on the way to school."

"Yeah," Tommy said looking sad, "after he died, I didn't want to take over here, but he wanted me to keep it. He'd built this place, and he was proud of it."

Sammy looked pensive, "Yeah, and what has our generation built? Those that had something given to them sold it off so people like me work over half our lives only to be let go."

"Yeah, like Ted Turner built all that and sold it off. Damn AOL's ruining the Braves---trading Millwood."

"They've got the best record in baseball," Sammy responded.

"Yeah, but just think what they'd be if they still had Millwood."

"I should've saved more. But the kids needed braces," his left index finger poking his right palm, "and college and cars," Sammy groaned. "It's not like I'm begrudging my children stuff, but I wish I could start my own business or something."

"What kind of business?" asked Tommy.

"What the heck does it matter? I ain't got the money," blurted Sammy.

Jenny motioned at Sammy from the phone on the wall, "Baby, it's your wife. Wants to know if you're here."

"Tell her I just walked out the door," Sammy threw six ones across the bar. "See ya after while, Tommy."

"See ya, Bubba. Wait a minute. What're are you going to do?" Tommy asked Sammy as he headed toward the door.

"I don't know. Right now, I just don't know." Sammy put on his sunglasses and left.



Rhonda Duncan

Patience is the key to learning music. It requires time to take root in the soul before it can blossom. There is no rushing nature.

Nancy Lesh

*Creating Cartoons in Secondary Science: A Comical Approach
to Discovering Science*

Science, what a majestic word! When I think of the meaning of science, I think of creation, imagination, and discovery. Until I started teaching science, I did not realize how much writing and science are connected. Some may think the only writing that is completed in science is through a research paper, but as a science teacher, I strongly disagree. Writing in science helps the students to express their creativity and increase their knowledge of particular aspects in the discipline. As a science teacher, I want my students to get as much out of our class as possible. I incorporate various styles of writing about science so that I can reach every learning style. I use research papers for some of the science curriculum, but I also have students create cartoons, write articles, journals, and poetry, and make a brochure. Of all these, I have found the technique of cartooning to be one of the best ways for students to express their learning and understanding of science.

Have you ever read the cartoon section of a newspaper or magazine, or sat down and read through a comic book? For most of us, the answer would be yes. Even if we did not read the writing in the cartoon, we at least looked at the pictures. I bet when you looked at those pictures, you did not realize you were actually reading. I have always at least glanced at cartoons, but I never really thought I was reading by just looking at the pictures. Many of my students are the same way; they do not realize that when they look at something, they are actually reading what the picture says. Using the pictures, students make inferences and interpretations, which are higher-level critical thinking skills. As the

old saying goes, “actions speak louder than words.” In our classroom, we say pictures paint the actions of words in writing about science. I have always known how important reading and writing are, but I did not realize how often I would be using writing until I became a teacher. We all have favorite ways to teach writing using strategies that work best. Using cartoons as a writing activity is one of the best methods I have used as a teacher.

I have learned most of my writing activities from fellow teachers, workshops, Alabama Reading Initiative training, and personal ideas. Through the years, I have added to and taken away from the actual cartoon activity that I use. I use material from the science curriculum to do cartooning. The students do not realize they are actually writing while completing their cartoon. Of course, when I mention the word “write,” the class moans and groans, and I always have at least one student who says, “We write in English; we should not have to write in science.” I then explain how important writing is in any subject and go on with the lesson. Before the students know it, they have finished their cartoons and created within themselves a new understanding of writing in science class.

Through this writing process, I have found that most of my students have a vivid imagination. The cartoon activity allows them to use their imagination and learn more about the science content in the process. I can use the cartoon activity in both physical science and biology, but I have found that it is easier to use in biology because of the difficulty of the information presented in that subject. For example, one of the major concentration areas on the science portion of the Alabama High School Graduation Exam

is the animal cell, which is taught in biology. There are many separate sections about the cell in our biology curriculum, which can be quite difficult to explain. Each animal cell has a particular function, and many parts within the cell have their own function. I like to use the cartoon for this section of biology because it helps break down the particular parts of the cell, and the students have an opportunity to write using their own words, which helps them understand the material. The cartoon writing activity allows students to be creative and original in their writing and illustrations. I always make sure students have prior knowledge of the animal cell before we begin this activity. I include a class discussion about the cell and its parts to answer any questions and clarify any misconceptions they may have. The discussion allows the students to comprehend the material.

The cartoon writing assignment is a fun alternative to writing a research paper and allows the students to learn the majority of information on their own. I use this writing as an individual activity or sometimes as a group assignment. Both writing individually and as a group have been very effective in our classroom. The students receive a grade upon the completion of the assignment. If I assign the writing individually, I give students several days to complete it, and it counts as a test grade. While grading the individual pieces, I look for creativity, subject matter, illustrations, any research they may have completed, neatness, and the student's ability to follow directions. As a group activity, the cartoon assignment allows the students a chance to work with their peers, and most of the time, they end up helping each other understand the information better. I grade each group based on their participation during the activity, creativity, neatness, information,

and following directions. Groups are required to present their final products to the class. Both the individual and group cartoon writing activities are effective for the students' learning of the subject matter. After the assignment is completed, many students cannot believe cartooning is an actual form of writing, and most request the assignment again.

I like using this form of writing about science because not only are the students writing, but they are also learning the information while writing. I also like the cartoon activity because I can change it to fit the learning styles and abilities of the different students I teach each year. Students enjoy the cartoon writing activity, and above all, they get something out of it by expressing their ideas while learning the concepts. This activity has worked wonders in our classroom. Now my students know that writing not only occurs in English but in all subjects.

Cloe, My Curious Collie

Out in the yard I hear rumbling
Little do I know the leaves are crumbling.
Bark, bark is the noise I hear
When from behind a bush my curious collie appears.

Black, white, and tan are her markings
While she continues on her way mightily barking.
Jump, jump is how she moves
A slow pounce is how she grooves.

Running, frolicking as she appears
Joyous barking as she nears.
Running, running with all her might
She seems to have me in her sight.

I think of running away
No, I'll stay and see what she has in store for me today.
Like a child running to his or her family
She continues running toward me, not so calmly.

Wow! She seems to have so much energy, I think to myself
How can I get that energy when I look like an elf?
Friendly barks as she comes near
Her brother Riley right at her rear.

She jumps up for kisses on my cheek
While Riley turns around for a peek.
She plays and plays all day long
Acting as if nothing can ever go wrong.

Loving kisses as I hold her in my lap
How I wonder when she might be ready for a nap.
Knowing that she will always be the best
Cloe, My Curious Collie finally lays down her head for rest.

Curiosity

“Ouch!” Zoe screamed as she ran through the prickly briars deep in the pine forest. Zoe, a delightful young girl, spent most of her time hiding, running, and playing in the piney woods behind her grandmother’s house. Zoe always played in the late afternoon of the day, but she had never seen anything quite like what she saw today. All Zoe knew was that she had to run and run as fast as she could. As she ran she could feel her body begin to tremble, “It is not cold,” she thought. “Why am I so scared?” she said softly to herself as she rounded another tree.

Zoe had begun her afternoon journey through the lush pine forest a little earlier than usual today. She had been intrigued by a faint sound that she heard deep within the forest. As she entered the forest, she thought, only for a moment, that she might need to tell her grandmother where she was going, but that sound... it sounded oh, so familiar. As she moved deeper into the woods she noticed that she could no longer feel the warmth of the bright orange-yellow sun that had filled the sky earlier. Zoe also noticed that the sound was farther away than she had originally thought. “Maybe I should turn around and head back home,” she thought as she continued to move closer to the sound rather than turning around. As she drew closer to the noise, the trembling throughout her body became more evident, and she could feel the wetness of her sweating palms. Zoe suddenly felt a creeping chill move up her spine as if she were walking through a dark, lonely haunted house. She wanted to turn around and run back home, but the compelling sound continued to draw her closer. As she rounded a large pine tree, her eyes widened with fear as she came face to face with the sound that had brought her so close. Zoe froze

in her tracks as she could feel the chilling fear take over her body. As she stood there trembling, she wondered, “Will anyone find me? Why did I not go back home?” Just as a chilly deep voice reached to grab her, Zoe turned and began to run as fast as she could hoping to find anything that seemed familiar. She could hear footsteps matching hers just a few feet behind as she darted through the tall trees. Zoe zigged and zagged from tree to tree, hoping she could lose him. She turned and peeked to see where he was. She thought to herself, “I can make it! I know I can make it!”

Wham! Zoe did not see the branch as she rounded the last tree; the branch forced her into a tumble as she hit the ground. As she lay on the moist, mossy ground, she trembled in fear as she could hear footsteps coming closer and closer. Zoe tried with all her might to move, but she was so stunned she could not move an inch without pain. She could hear the crackling of leaves nearing; then, as she looked up, she saw him standing over her triumphantly. His large paws reached out for her...“Zoe! Zoe! get down here. You are going to be late.” She could hear her grandmother yelling from the kitchen. Zoe shot straight up in her bed. A dream, it was only a dream.

Time

Time

What is time?

History making history

Nature occurring

Music playing

Time

What is time?

Life making life

Water flowing

Trees blowing

Time

What is time?

Adaptors making adaptations

Birds flying

Frogs leaping

Time

What is time?

Change making changes

Babies growing

Animals dying

Time

What is time?

Time is precious

Time is ever-changing

Time is our lives that God has graciously given us



Joanne Gates

Come writers and critics who prophesize with your pen...
don't speak too soon, for the wheel's still in spin
And there's no tellin' who that it's namin'....
For the times they are a'changin'.

Bob Dylan

How the "One-Pager" Can Work as Another Form of Graphic Organizer

In the past, I have had a casual approach to an exercise I have used to develop students' responses to works of literature. After recent workshops with the National Writing Project, at JSU's 2003 Summer Institute, I have come to see how the "One-Pager" can serve not merely as a handy tool in my literature classes but as an essential ingredient in the teaching of composition. I had a wonderful introduction to this as a teaching tool at the Shades Valley Alabama Council of Teachers of English Fall Conference, November 6, 1998. Recently, I corresponded with Dr. Elaine N. Hill, then director of AP English at Ramsay High School, who presented "Clustering With the One Pager" as a workshop, and she has endorsed my passing on her tactic in this essay. Sometimes I adapt her lesson so to my own purposes that I do not directly credit her, but here I want to show how her approach has influenced my own. As I have participated in this summer's JSU Writing Project, through some of the information shared about "Graphic Organizers" --the term shared by WP Assistant Director Lisa Light and mentioned in our class text--I've come to see the learning tool that the exercise provides in the context of a broader theory of writing to learn.

Essentially, the task of a one-pager is to lead students to target and analyze reading by allowing them a creative way to present the theme of the piece with supporting details, including a sketch or graphic. Both Dr. Hill's and my own variations stress the importance of quotations from the original; I will use my variation to serve as a planning draft of a future paper. Goals include students' presentation to others of succinct and detailed information to convey their understandings of a sophisticated work of literature.

Dr. Hill's original instructional unit analyzed Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour." Her workshop allowed the opportunity to read the story, try a "One-Pager" of our own, and examine her students' projects. We were also exposed to how she adapted it to other literature or for review of specific vocabulary review words. I have used the one-pager for short stories and with acts of Shakespearean plays, most recently *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, both because it fell in the semester that way and because some of the pageant-like action seems to translate to visual depiction. I also have used it for studying key paragraphs of descriptive narrative in Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills*. I stress that students need not be artists, that stick figures and cut-out collages are a good way to depict visual relationships. The original asks that students extract from the quotations or a single quotation five key words, rewritten as a graphic, and I encourage these in the form of "Word Art." Sometimes students have access to a variety of clip-art images that form a motif for what they are presenting.

In her presentation, Dr. Hill advised us to work one step at a time, even to have the class complete Step 1 before showing or assigning Step 2, but she also allowed us, if we were more comfortable, to present the entire set of directions so that the end product was clearly visible before students began. Obviously, the tactic to complete one step at a time only works the first time it is tried. With adult learners, some reluctant to commit to a sketch for credit, I much prefer the conscious attention to how the exercise can be productive. Usually I assign these illustrations of a text in one class and take them up after presentations at the next class, which could be two days, five days, or a week later. Because we have time to present these in class, the quick assessment shows students there

are various ways to complete the project. One thing that students foreground is descriptive language; the assignment helps them translate imagery in the language into something basic and metaphoric by finding clear pictograms for sometimes very dense literature. Although I have made use of the assignment for close focus on an assigned paragraph, and can see it applied to even a smaller unit, the exercise is meant to force students to return to a work they have read in entirety. This is the next phase of synthesizing the important ingredients, for I will be using their illustrations as starting maps for their drafts of an analysis paper.

Dr. Hill's Exercise, Clustering With The One-Pager.

Directions for One-Pager

Step 1: On your blank sheet of paper draw an image that is appropriate to the story. You may use any image that is grounded in the text.

Step 2: Choose five **key words** from the text and place them anywhere you think appropriate on the page. Key words are words that actually appear in the text that you think have power and meaning.

Step 3: Choose two quotations from the story. This can be any phrase, sentence, or paragraph that you think is important in the story. Make sure that you place quotation marks around these passages.

Step 4: Look at your image, key words, and quotations. How do they relate to each other? What do they tell you about the text? Write an **interpretive theme statement** that expresses the meaning of what is on your page. You will need to write two, three, or more sentences to express your idea fully.

One main variable I introduce is that my directions begin with the finding of the essential quotation. I have also had success in some versions of the exercise to assign a three-part, one pager (it can be one sheet, folded in three or one sheet each for three related panels), the triptych. Here is how I gave out the directions for my World Literature study of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*:

Adaptation of a "One-Pager" exercise. Do this as a triptych, either a three-panel or three-plate series. Select a moment from any of three acts that represent a beginning, middle, and end for a *particular* motif or character or recurrent idea. Use space graphically. Include for each captured moment:

A. Page | Character | Speech. Reproduce the lines of the chosen scene, tagged with the citation.

B. Brief Summary in your own words of how the moment represents a theme in the play or main concern of one of the characters. Take some care with this: it should work as the thesis statement of any paper you are developing around the details depicted.

C. The tensions, resonance, or competing focus of this moment (What else has just happened, is about to happen, or is going on elsewhere as this receives focus?)

D. Any kind of symbolic rendering of the moment. This can be "word art" – the sketch of a word or short phrase in a manner that captures its mood – or a sketch of some one thing or representation from the scene. You may use simple stick figures, but you are not expected to sketch the full stage composition of characters.

I also use the triptych adaptation when assigning selected action out of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Usually, I assign an individual student one act of that play; sometimes one student follows a single character as he or she moves through the course of the play, including, of course, the work's last image of the character. Some display their adeptness with computer layout; some make use of collage and decorate with cutout illustrations.

My participation in Summer 2003 Writing Project at JSU has intensified the importance of "Graphic Organizers" in the teaching of writing. I had certainly seen before and used without naming it the Venn Diagram: two loops, or overlapping circles, chart what is common to both (inside the overlap) and what is unique to one or the other. Lisa Light reminded us that the Venn Diagram can be used by her middle school students to structure comparison and contrast. Ruth Hooks, Writing Specialist for the State of Alabama, reminds us that to require some prewriting--some kind of outline, clustering

page of brainstorming, or scratch draft--is the only truly effective way to have students reflect on their process and, by doing so, consciously work to improve their composition.

I will be making more use of the one-pager as I teach both composition and literature. For my level, in college classes for English 102 and above, writing is a component of a class that always includes the study of literature. In the past, I have used the one-pager no more than once per semester, usually near the end. Some students who do very well in other phases of the class consider this either busy work or pointless, despite my stress that they can acquire the skills of analysis in a variety of ways. With my newfound pedagogical underpinning for the exercise, I can communicate the tactic of graphing as an essential learning tool. The variety of ways I can adapt the one-pager are more suitable than some other strategies, ones where younger students chart plans for pre-writing or observations about literature to a rigid format. If I model a Venn Diagram, I would likely ask students to rearrange their initial three panel Venn Diagram so that each paragraph contains a claim of comparison / contrast. I call that a commonality within which there is a difference. (Laertes and Ophelia are both foil characters to Hamlet, in that they both respond to their father's death; but how each responds differently and counterpoints a response that Hamlet himself makes to his father's death can then be charted as its own detailed plan for a composition.) I will be using my JSU website area to publish student one-pagers. These will be available from the address <http://www.jsu.edu/depart/english/gates>. I also plan to more cohesively expect a chart, plan, one-pager, traditional outline, or clustering sheet as a required component of pre-writing. Some students might rough out a draft first, then reorganize the paper by charting

the intended plan. In constructing one-pagers of their own papers, they become sketch artists for their own ambitious schemes; they will give order to detail and embellish intended designs with the flourishes that make them proud of their own masterpieces.

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Carol Hoggle

Only when you see the invisible, can you do
the impossible.

Unknown

Burial on Red Mountain

I remember it as if it were yesterday. The year was 1936. I was six and living with my family in a small house at the base of Red Mountain in Birmingham. Mrs. Stone was our neighbor who had five children and no husband—at least not a husband who was ever home. She lived in a run-down old store building, the remains of a business gone bad as so many had during the Depression. Being the oldest of six siblings, I was always anxious to get out of the house and out of my responsibility of babysitting. On this day I was asked to help our neighbor Mrs. Stone chop wood. Mrs. Stone and I would often trudge up the mountain to chop up the fallen trees for wood.

On this special day, while we were chopping wood, we heard the sputtering of an old truck heading our way. Not knowing if these visitors were friend or foe, we hid behind the nearest tree and kept as silent as possible.

“Don’t say a word,” I remember Mrs. Stone breathlessly whispering to me. I could feel my heart pounding in my little chest. The beat-up truck stopped a few hundred yards from us. Three burly men jumped out, teetered to the back of the truck, and picked up what appeared to be a rug. They then proceeded to a small clearing. At this point, our curiosity was peaked. I strained as hard as I could to make out their voices, but they were too far away. After placing the large parcel down, the smallest of the three men went back to the truck and then returned with shovels for each of them. They began to dig what looked like a shallow grave. When finished, they picked up the rug and placed it in the freshly dug pit and then used the shovels to cover it up. In what seemed like an hour (but was probably only a half hour), the men completed their task, ambled back to the pickup,

and left.

Mrs. Stone and I were baffled. "Why would anyone bury an old rug?" I asked. Well, of course, one wouldn't; but one would bury an old rug if a body were in it. "But who did they bury?" I continued.

"Let's get out of here before they come back and spot us," Mrs. Stone gasped. Well, I didn't want to stay and find out who they were or what they had done, so I hurriedly helped Mrs. Stone load our little Radio Flyer and rushed down the hill dragging our load while Mrs. Stone pushed. We parked the wagon and ran to the nearby flower nursery to use the telephone to call the police. Later that day, the police did come by to tell us that they didn't find any grave.

To this day, we never found out who was buried. In fact, I realize today how strange it was that the police didn't even ask us to show them the site. I remember Mama saying that the men who buried the rug were probably moonshiners and the body was probably someone who had crossed their path unexpectedly. And the police, well, Mama said even the police were afraid of the moonshiners and probably were not too anxious to run into them, either.

Successful Grammar Instruction

With the planning of stricter state mandates, Alabama English teachers may find themselves accountable for their students' scores on the SAT, AHSGE, and the Writing Assessment. With their futures at stake, these teachers are hard pressed to discover effective methods of grammar instruction.

In their article "Why Revitalize Grammar?," Patricia Dunn and Kenneth Lindblom advise that we don't need to revitalize grammar, only writers. Because grammar study is so important, students "must be taught the complex, higher order tasks of analyzing each rhetorical situation in which they write" (49). To accomplish this task, teachers must make sure their students can write "so that they can make sophisticated decisions about audience, purpose, and voice" (49). In other words, grammar must be taught in context with students' writings (Doniger 102). But, how do we teach grammar in context?

Paul Doniger uses the study of grammar to help his students gather meaning from text. In his study of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, he draws his students' attention to the opening paragraph. After gathering meaning, he asks the simple question, "What is unusual about the sentences in this paragraph?" This leads to a discussion of subjects/verbs and, finally, to the realization that this opening paragraph has no verb. Then there is a discussion of the author's intent (102). In teaching *Romeo and Juliet*, he introduces the chorus at the beginning and has his students locate the subject/predicate. This leads to a discussion of Shakespeare's theme and the realization that "Two households...break" and that this is a story of the breaking or conflict of two households

and not just the love story of Romeo and Juliet (103). This type of transformational grammar is “not intended to teach grammar, either as a tool for writing or as discrete skill, but to use grammar as a tool for other learning outcomes” (104). Sometimes it is necessary to use their grammar text to teach some necessary skills missed or forgotten, but never is grammar taught without showing it in context (104). Teachers no longer torture students with period-long grammar instruction consisting of endless worksheets in the name of education.

If so many educators are recommending the teaching of grammar in context, and if Alabama’s future mandates require that teaching methods used are research based, then, what does research say about teaching grammar in context? In the 1960s, studies showed that teaching grammar separate from writing does not improve students’ writings: “Researchers agree that it is more effective to teach punctuation, sentence variety, and usage in the context of writing than to approach the topic by teaching isolated skills” (Chin).

If the best method for improving students’ skills is to teach grammar in context, then what strategies should be used? As Professor Chin of the University of Montana advises, grammar instruction should be used to aid students in their revising and editing stages. Once students have written their first drafts and are pleased with the organization of their writing, teachers can help students determine if their language choices are appropriate for their audience and purpose. This “helps students make immediate applications, thus allowing them to see the relevance of grammar to their own writing” (Chin).

In the article "The Glossing Process as a Practical Approach to Grammar Instruction," Deborah Johansen and Nancy L. Shaw agree that the traditional method of teaching grammar is obsolete. They recommend that teachers not only teach grammar in context, but that they also use something known as the glossing process. In the glossing process, students correct five errors identified by their teachers and identify the grammatical rules broken. The students return the corrected compositions to their teachers along with a glossing sheet (a sheet of paper describing each grammatical rule that was broken) Over time, students gain a mastery of grammar rules (98).

Whether or not state mandates which hold teachers accountable pass, educators can feel good knowing that they are teaching grammar the recommended way. Not only is teaching grammar in context a research-approved method, but it is also a successful method.

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Life's Lesson

On a visit to the Anniston Museum of Natural History, I discovered that animals teach us a lot about survival in the classroom. For instance, look at the tiny wolverine. This tiny wolverine (which only weighs 45 pounds) is able to frighten away a 1000 pound grizzly. How is this possible? The wolverine simply growls and shows his teeth in such a way that the grizzly actually fears for his life. Or, what about the tiny opossum—how can it possibly survive the many predators that might seek it for dinner? Well, it does something called “feigning death.” It simply lies on its side in a death stance with its mouth open secreting very foul-smelling saliva, and what once was a very appetizing meal is now fodder food. Then there is the dwarf antelope. It survives by simply blending in with the foliage and disappearing from sight.

What life lesson can we learn from our animal friends to use in our classroom? Should we make sure that our bark is louder than our bite, or feign death and hope that our students eventually go away? Perhaps we should take our cue from the dwarf antelope and just hide. No, I think we can learn that, unlike Hardees’ big burger, size is irrelevant. What does matter is that we are equipped with knowledge, techniques, and planning so that we can survive the classroom, and, just like our small animal friends, we, too, can adapt to our environment.



Gloria Horton

See deep enough and you see musically, the heart of nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it.

Thomas Carlyle

Morning Signs: A Catalog

The slow lightening of the sky outside my window,
 The shrillness of the alarm clock beside my bed,
 The sloppy kisses of my dog as they touch my face,
 The swish of the cat's tail as she brushes against me—
 These are signs of morning.

The watermelon-colored tint as the sun comes up,
 The twitter of sparrows as they feed by the oak tree,
 Sam the Squirrel's quick scamper across the lawn,
 Wet blades of grass covering his tiny tracks—
 These too signal morning.

Tiny prisms of dew made golden by sunlight,
 Mourning doves cooing as they perch on the deck,
 Whispers of leaves set in motion by the wind,
 Warmth from the sun filtering through windows,
 More welcome signs of morning.

The sweet smell of coffee perking in the kitchen,
 The arrival of the morning paper before sun-up,
 Water from the shower splashing into the tub,
 The whirl of the hair dryer coming from the bathroom,
 These also say, "It's morning."

Traffic snarls on the hectic drive to work,
 Everywhere, cars moving too slow or too fast,
 Bleary-eyed students propped up by their desks,
 Soft, guttural snores from the back of the classroom
 Are among the signs of morning.

Sights, sounds, and smells of each new morn
 Preordain the other events of the day ahead,
 Inviting me to explore a whole new world,
 And making me glad to have awakened
 To look out on another morning!

Two Roses

The first rose, full blown, strong and beautiful
in its prime,
Began to lose its luster.
Petals once unblemished began to blight
As the once perfect blossom faded,
Drooped,
Decayed,
Died.
The perfect flower lived no more—
My precious father lost.

The second rose, a mere bud, tiny and frail,
in its infancy,
Grows each day more luscious.
Small, wondrous petals begin to stretch
As the baby bud slowly opens,
Burgeons,
Blossoms,
Blesses.
A perfect flower lives once more—
My new-born granddaughter.

These roses, though their paths never crossed
in this life
Are tightly bound together.
The first rose nurtured the forebears of the second,
So the second rose
Will live,
Will love,
Will flourish.
These two roses, forever intertwined—
Both precious gifts to me.

For the first rose, I sorely grieve each day,
My heart aching,
As I cry mournfully for his return.
The second rose makes my heart rejoice
As she meets each day,
Living,
Learning,
Loving.

These two roses, such harbingers of joy—
Beloved flowers in my life.

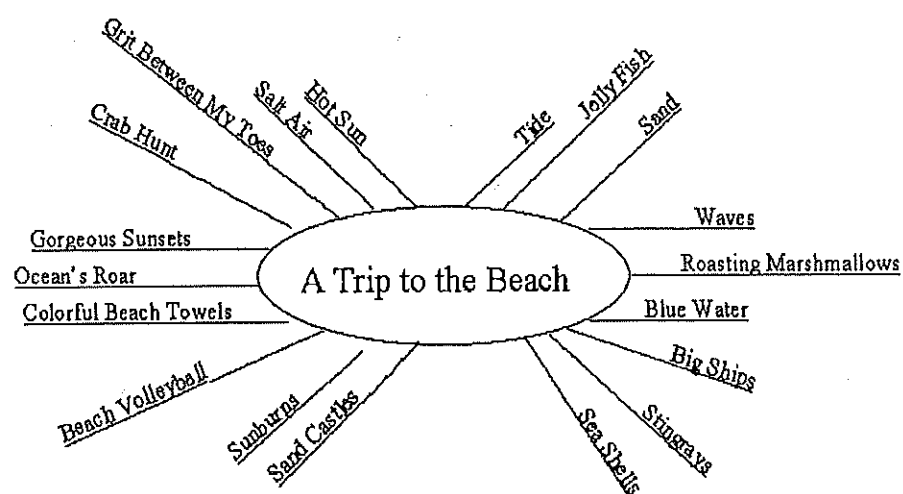
“It Was a Dark and Stormy Night”

As a fan of the comic strip *Peanuts*, I have followed Snoopy's writing career closely. What I have noticed over the years is that he rarely gets past “It was a dark and stormy night,” and when he does, it is only to add other sentences of the same ilk. Bless his little beagle heart, Snoopy just cannot seem to realize his dream of being a famous writer. For him, rejection is his closest friend, and success is his worst enemy. Snoopy's problem is the same problem so many writers face—he just cannot seem to get past the introduction! He gets stuck before he ever gets into the story that he probably could tell if he did not have it in his head that he had to start with the introduction. Most student writers are just like Snoopy—they want to start with the introduction, getting it on paper to their satisfaction before they write anything else. And just like Snoopy, the introduction is as far as some students get before they just give up. These students will come to their teachers, saying such things as “I couldn't think of anything to write” or “I got stuck at the beginning.” The sad element here is that, like Snoopy, many of the students could be good writers if they could just let go.

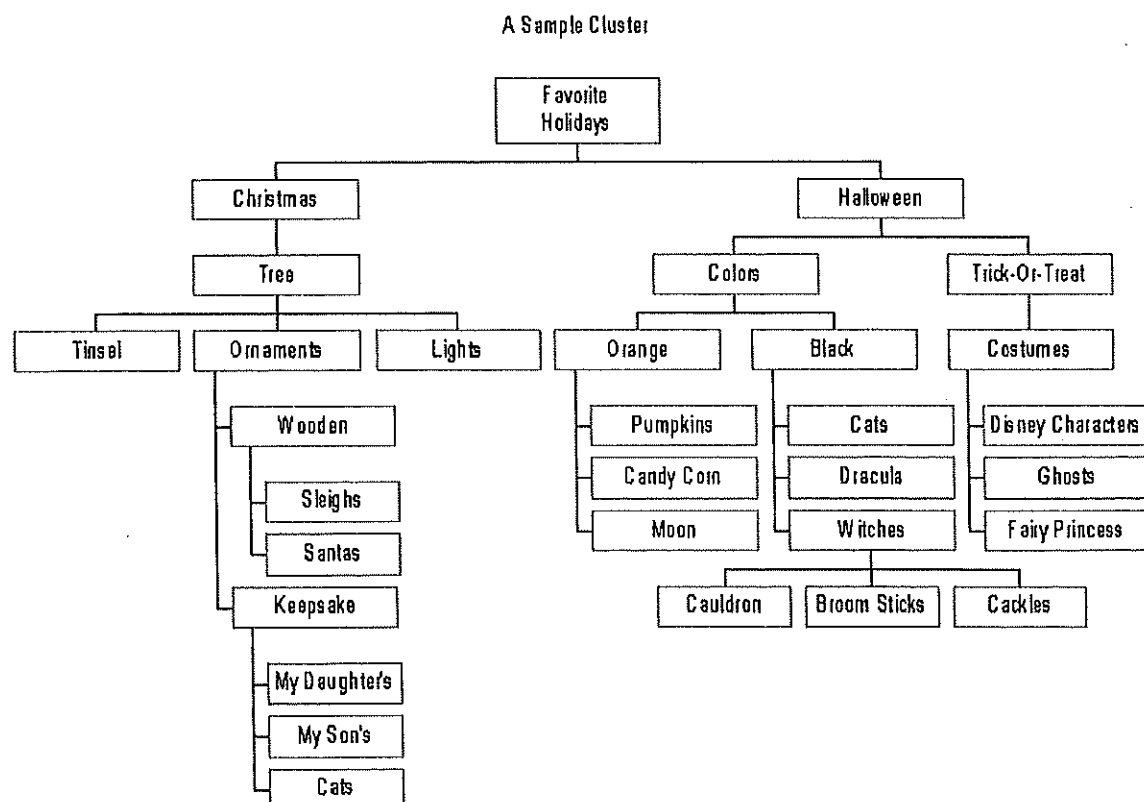
Getting students to ‘let go’ with their writing is not always easy, but with the right strategies, it can be done. One way to get students to let go with their writing is through teaching them a variety of prewriting techniques they can use. One of my favorite prewriting activities is the mind map, in which the student simply writes the topic within a circle and writes everything he or she can think of pertaining to the topic, paramecium-like, outside the circle. Once the student has generated as many ideas on the topic as possible, he or she is ready to begin the second step of prewriting—sorting and

ordering the information. Mind mapping is a prewriting strategy I discovered when I taught Communicative Skills to officers in the United States Army, and it is one that works well for the freshmen and sophomores I now teach. Mind mapping gives the students one way to get past "It was a dark and stormy night."

A Sample Mind Map



Another way to get past such beginnings is clustering, introduced by Gabriele Rico in her book, *Writing the Natural Way*. Clusters, like mind maps, begin with a topic inside a circle. The difference between the two is that clusters take the prewriter along a more organized path than does mind mapping. For each idea that one comes up with on a topic, one must then generate ideas associated with each idea and then ideas associated with each sub-idea so that the writer will have several layers of content for each idea associated with the main topic. Once a student has done a cluster, he or she is ready to arrange the elements of the cluster according to importance or chronology. Clustering allows the writer to begin with a multilevel outline of his or her topic:



(Note: Rico does clustering using circles, with the topic being the center circle. Since my computer program did not allow easy duplication of that method, I used an organizational chart format to convey the idea.)

When students in classes are all assigned the same topic, one way to get them started is in-class brainstorming of the topic. Once the teacher has written the topic on the board, the teacher asks the students to call out any words or ideas they can associate with the topic. The teacher, or some other appointed person, records the ideas while the students are presenting them; another option is for the teacher to write the ideas on the board as they are called out, but have each student copy his or her own list AFTER all the brainstorming is completed. Brainstorming is also a good activity to use in expanding vocabulary (another area in which Snoopy needed help). For example, a teacher might write the word “move” on the board and ask the students to call out all the ways of “moving” they can think of. Brainstorming works well in teaching students to be more specific in their writing and is an activity that can achieve a lot in a small amount of time.

A Brainstorm of the Word “Move”

amble	sidle	perambulate	scoot
saunter	bounce	meander	tiptoe
trot	jog	run	sashay
hike	tromp	ramble	tramp
dance	hop	wiggle	poke along

This brainstorm provides a sample of how this activity aids students with specificity in writing and in vocabulary improvement. The example is, of course, incomplete, for these are only some of the words in our language that mean “move.” This technique will

enable students to move beyond using such words as “go,” “great,” and “interesting” in their writing and will allow them to strengthen their writing vocabulary as they find their writing voice.

Keeping lists also helps writers get past “It was a dark and stormy night.” At the beginning of each semester, I have my students make headings in their journal books such as “Places I’ve Been,” “Places I’d Like to Go,” “People I Admire,” “Bad People,” “Good People,” “My Favorite Movies,” “Things I Believe In,” and other similar headings. We usually start the semester off with ten to twenty headings, and I encourage the students to add more headings as they think of them. I then allow them some time to do some listing under each heading and encourage them to keep adding to their lists throughout the term. When it is time to write descriptive essays, I may send them to one of their “Places” headings for ideas about what to write; for persuasive essays, they may go to “Things I Believe In.” At least, with these lists, they have a starting point for finding something to write about. After choosing a topic from the list, they are ready to brainstorm or mind map or cluster that topic, putting them closer to being ready to write.

Other types of prewriting include using graphic organizers such as timelines (especially useful for students who are preparing to write literary or historical pieces, as well as personal narratives and cause-effect essays); Venn Diagrams, excellent prewriting tools for comparison-contrast writing; and story notes, graphic organizers that assist students in preparing to write analytical essays about stories they have read. An excellent resource for teachers who wish to use these and other graphic organizers as prewriting activities for their students is Jim Burke’s newest book, *Tools for Thought: Graphic*

Organizers for Your Classroom (Heinemann 2002). Not only will teachers find reproducible models of the graphic organizers I have mentioned, but they also will find dozens of other graphic organizers to fit almost any kind of writing situation.

Helping students to become better writers can best be accomplished by helping them become better prewriters. As teachers, we should explore as many types of prewriting activities as we can so that our students can find the ones that work best for them. Since students learn in diverse ways, no one method of prewriting will work for every student, but nearly all students (and professional writers, too) will benefit from some form of prewriting. Gertrude Stein says it this way: “[I] think of the writing in terms of discovery, which is to say that creation must take place between the pen and the paper, not before in a thought or afterwards in a recasting” (qtd. in Murray 113). Prewriting gives student writers the opportunity to engage in this creation without being stifled by concerns about grammar and mechanics. It allows them the opportunity to find something to say and say it in a non-threatening environment, to find for themselves as William Makepeace Thackeray did that, ‘There are a thousand thoughts lying within a man that he does not know until he takes up the pen to write’ (qtd. in Murray 113). To play on the words of William Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*, prewriting brings “method” to the “madness” of our ideas and helps us to organize them into good writing. Prewriting gets us past “It was a dark and stormy night.”

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LeAnne Jenkins

Ceaseless work, analysis, reflection, writing
much, endless self-correction, that is my
secret.

J.S. Bach

Teaching the Essay

The debate continues about which approach should be used in teaching the essay. Some educators believe that the five-paragraph format is the best. Others are looking for new essay approaches that are not as formulaic and rigid as the five-paragraph theme. In an attempt to give both formats equal treatment, the following methods will be reviewed and evaluated: the five-paragraph theme, the “hamburger” method, the Jane Schaffer Approach, and 6+1 Traits™ of Writing. The reader can then decide which method or format would be best for the classroom.

The five-paragraph theme has been a part of the English writing curriculum for many years. This is probably the easiest way to teach the essay in a classroom. This method involves an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. The introductory paragraph contains an attention-getter. This sentence gives the reader a sense of expectation and also serves to get the reader involved in the essay. The next items within the introductory paragraph are the main points to be covered within the body of the essay. Finally, the introductory paragraph contains the thesis statement. This thesis statement gives the overall purpose for writing the essay. The three body paragraphs share the same basic format. Each paragraph renames the main point in a topic sentence, then about three supporting arguments with examples or details are given. Finally, a clincher sentence is given. In the fifth and final paragraph, the thesis is restated. The major points within the essay are supported. To end the essay, a “super” clincher is given (Dean 54).

This method is probably the easiest way to teach the essay, but it also has it

weaknesses. To begin with, the five-paragraph theme is very formulaic. Not every type of essay can be written in five paragraphs. Many expository or analytical essays require a lot more than five paragraphs to cover everything thoroughly. In other instances, the five-paragraph theme is too long. This method would best work in a classroom in which the essay is being taught for the first time. This method can be taught comprehensively within a unit dealing with the various types of essays. The formulaic aspects of the five-paragraph essay can be highly frustrating to some students. Another problem with this method of teaching the essay is that it is "often boring, both to write and read" (Dean 54). It can also be difficult to steer students away from the five-paragraph approach because "they can use it almost without thinking" (Dean 55). This format for teaching the essay has both good and bad points. It is easy for the teacher to teach and for the student to understand. It is perfect for students who have never written an essay. It is a good starting point, but students need to realize that not everything can fit into this formula.

Another method of teaching the essay is the "hamburger" method. This method follows a formula, but can have more or less than five paragraphs. To begin with, the teacher introduces basic essay writing in the "metaphorical terms of building the perfect burger" (Kemp 1). Each student draws two buns on a sheet of notebook paper. Inside the buns, the students write the words introduction and conclusion. The teacher then points out the "importance of the buns" (Kemp 1). The teacher also points out that without the introduction and conclusion, the "essay will be messy," just like a hamburger without buns (Kemp 1). Next, the teacher discusses the meat of the essay, or the body: "After all the burger is tasteless without the essentials" (Kemp 1). Finally, the discussion moves to

the importance of condiments, or examples, in creating a satisfying burger. While all this discussion is taking place, the teacher and students are drawing a burger on the board and papers.

This method can be used to teach the essay in grades seven through eleven. Again, this method is formulaic, but not as rigid as the five-paragraph theme. This method allows for some more flexibility because just like with a hamburger, the student can choose which "condiments" he/she wants on the hamburger. Even though this method can be used in upper grades, it is best used at the middle school level. This lesson would be a great way to introduce the essay in a limited situation. Younger students might enjoy the metaphor of comparing an essay to a hamburger.

The next method is relatively new. This method is called the Jane Schaffer Approach. Her method is a "nine-week, step-by-step method for teaching secondary students how to write the multi-paragraph essay" (Wiley 62). This method uses a four-paragraph essay. Each paragraph of the essay has a specific format, except when dealing with the introduction and conclusion. Body paragraphs are arranged as follows":

Topic Sentence
Concrete Detail #1
 Commentary #1a
 Commentary #1b
Concrete Detail #2
 Commentary #2a
 Commentary #2b
Concluding Sentence

Each body paragraph must contain eight sentences. The concrete detail is "any kind of specific detail such as facts, evidence, examples, proofs, quotations or paraphrase, or plot

references” (Wiley 62). The ratio of one concrete to two commentaries must be maintained. Body paragraphs must have a minimum of one hundred words. The introduction and conclusion must have forty or more words. The introduction contains at least three sentences and a thesis somewhere in the first paragraph. The conclusion of the essay must contain “all commentary and provide a finished feeling to the essay” (Wiley 63). Schaffer’s approach replicates a format that is found in high scoring essays and AP exams. This approach also includes prewriting activities familiar to most teachers and rubrics to guide students in evaluating their own and their peers’ drafts. The prewriting activities include things like bubble and spider diagrams. The rubrics reinforce the basic format by having “students check for proper ratios between concrete details and commentaries; having them count the requisite number of words, sentences, and paragraphs; and making sure all parts fit the pattern” (Wiley 65). Teachers refer to this rubric in responding to student writing. This rubric makes evaluation much simpler and less time consuming.

This method is also formulaic, but it is favored by many teachers. This approach comes with lesson plans, worksheets, response guides, and a scoring rubric. Another bonus for teachers is that they do not have to spend a lot of time writing comments on papers to justify grades. The students benefit from this method because they learn to separate fact from opinion. They also learn that “evidence taken directly from texts becomes concrete details they must comment on in at least two sentences” (Wiley 64). Students learn to elaborate and develop claims made in their topic sentences. This method teaches the essay, but it also demystifies the writing process and makes that process

accessible to everyone. One problem with this method is that it does not allow students to develop a “repertoire of strategies for dealing effectively with various writing tasks presented to them in different situations” (Wiley 65). This method has both advantages and disadvantages, but many like it. It is easy for teachers and gives students a good method to follow. Even though it is formulaic, it does allow for students to use their own devices “when it comes to identifying and using strategies for inventing content (commentary)” (Wiley 65). Many teachers also enjoy that this method is set up to use during a nine-week unit on essay writing.

The final method is called the 6+1 Traits™ of Writing. This method uses seven characteristics. These characteristics are ideas (details, development, and focus), organization (internal structure), voice (tone, style, purpose, and audience), word choice (precise language and phrasing), sentence fluency (correctness, rhythm, and cadence), conventions (mechanical correctness), and presentation (handwriting, formatting, and layout). Teachers teach each of these traits when teaching the essay. The research done by teachers involved with this method has shown that each of these traits show up in all student writing. Teachers developed this method during the 1980s.

Some teachers are unsure how they feel concerning this method. Many see its good and bad qualities. This method looks at several aspects of the writing process. Each trait that is used is contained within the essay. The problem is that there is no formula. This might appeal to some students; for others, it will cause frustration because it offers no starting point. This method would take a lot of time because a teacher would have to first cover the traits, then begin teaching how to write an essay. Some teachers would not

use this method in their classroom for these reasons.

After much research, most teachers prefer the Jane Schaffer Approach to teaching the essay. It follows a set pattern, but it also allows for student freedom. This method would work well within a middle or high school environment. The key thing to remember when teaching the essay is that every student has a unique learning style. Each teacher should look at the make-up of his/her own classroom and decide which method would best meet the needs of his/her students.

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You

In March, you were the miracle child that wasn't supposed to be.

You were the tears of joy from your mom and laughs of excitement
from your dad.

In April, you were a small shape on a black and white screen with a racing
heartbeat we could see and hear.

You were the tears of amazement from your mom and the dropped jaw
of disbelief from your dad.

You were the reason for a college fund finally being paid in full.

You were the reason for minor decisions becoming major.

Would you like Pooh or Snoopy wallpaper, a pine or oak crib, a five drawer
or seven drawer chest?

In May, you were the lifeless shape on a black and white screen.

You had no heartbeat.

You were the tears of anguish, despair, sadness, and a lack of understanding
from your mom and dad.

You were laid in a tomb with others who had shared your fate.

You are in heaven, but you will always be with your mom and dad.



Elizabeth Johnson

We hide ourselves in our music to reveal
ourselves.

Jim Morrison

Inverse Proportion

I've never considered myself a particularly brilliant person, although I always managed to hold my own when watching "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire." However, I didn't realize my extreme lack of intelligence until my daughter reached adolescence. What is it that happens to a mother's IQ when her daughter makes that leap into an age that ends with "teen?" Is there current research being done to investigate this phenomenon? If so, I would like to contribute to the funding. There is an inverse proportion at work here: the older my daughter Ashley gets, the less intelligent I appear to be.

I obviously lack all common sense when it comes to fashion. I have given up on buying any of Ashley's clothes without her there to approve them. Without her nod of approval, I always buy jeans that don't flare at the bottom enough, tops that aren't short enough, and shorts that apparently don't reveal enough. At times I also find my lack of fashion sense drawing criticism toward my own clothing. On one occasion, the length of my shorts (obviously ten inches too long) provoked a gasp and an appalled, "Mama! THAT! That is just WRONG!" from Ashley.

Another flaw in my intelligence concerns motorized vehicles. Mercifully, my 2000 Honda Accord is acceptable for Ashley to be seen in. However, there was a near-death experience for her once when my car was in the shop, and she was forced to ride in a 1991 Dodge Spirit. For those of you who are as unintelligent as I, let me inform you that when dropping off a teenager in front of a high school campus, the radio is supposed to be quickly turned down low (never mind that it was blaring only seconds before), and

don't EVER try leaving an Eric Clapton CD playing during the actual drop-off.

When dealing with school issues, I apparently need a social skills intervention teacher. I was ignorant to the fact that if there is a problem that relates to Ashley's education or safety, it is not proper protocol for me to cross the threshold of the high school. Those of us who are intelligence-challenged might think that an incident involving a young man threatening students with a knife or a teacher whose lesson plan consists of three to four movies per week would be issues which would allow parental input. Think (if you can) again.

Ironically, I thought I was prepared for the teenage years. Granted, there have been things I haven't properly prepared for in my lifetime. For example, I wasn't prepared for what happens to a mother's belly button in the third trimester of pregnancy; I wasn't prepared for the call to poison control when my son ate a sand dollar; nor was I prepared for the kindergarten student who refused to come out from under my desk on the first day of school. But I thought I had really prepared myself physically, mentally, and emotionally to be the mother of a teenage girl. Alas, I soon found I was nowhere near prepared.

In moments of which only I am aware, I look at Ashley's long blond hair, her brilliant blue eyes, and the seventeen freckles on her nose. I reflect on her tender, loving spirit. I wonder how fourteen years could have passed since I brought her home from the hospital – wasn't that just last week? As I move ever closer to 40 and as Ashley moves closer to adulthood, I look forward to gaining on the intelligence scale. For now, however, I am satisfied to hold her close for a few more years and revel in my ignorance.

Six Years Old

With your blonde hair triangles
And your bronze little back
You bear your light sabre
All set to attack.

And as I look in your face which is both gentle and bold,
I wonder if you could please stay six years old.

I love how you run
Everywhere that you go.
And I love how you share with me
All that you know;

How Dr. Pepper is terrific
And chicken nuggets are the best
And we always are traveling
On the Happy Meal quest.

As time passes swiftly, the thought stops me cold
Could you please stay with me and just be six years old?

With rocks in your pockets
And gum stuck to your chin
It's still possible to see
God's precious spirit within.

Your prayers can move mountains more than once you've been told,
And I really would like to keep you here at just six years old.

Protectively you slip your small arm around me
And I'm touched by the love in your eyes that I see.
Turning and twisting everyone 'round your finger
I watch and I learn, and I want time to linger.

How I wish I could stop time and never let you go
But I'll cling to this precious time when you were just six years old.

Ten

Thousands of scraped knees
One billion bubble gum bubbles blown
Tree limbs climbed
Shoes outgrown

Ten

Candle wishes on birthday cakes
Half-eaten sandwiches cut into triangles
Mumbled prayers as eyelids close
Jeans worn thin on the knees

Ten

Whispers at night
And hopes in the day
The safety of the covers in the dark
Walks in the dew on dirty bare feet

Ten

Running and running and running
Laughing and laughing and laughing
Sparkling eyes
Not yet dulled by life's troubles

Ten

New shoes kept clean for less than a day
Bows, barrettes, muscles, big feet
Talking, giggling, crying, dreaming
Springing through life in too-short pants

Ten

A decade of life
You bounce through each day
As if life hasn't touched you
Yet

What does it whisper to you?
What will you remember of our year
spent together?
What did I tell you when I wasn't speaking?

Did you hear me
clearly
at
Ten?

Will you fight
the sway of the next decade?
Can you resist the pull of pride
and the lure of easiness?

Take up your sword against
the temptation of being right.
Strengthen your small bodies against
the evils of
Discouragement.
Do not allow brokenness from brandnames.

Fight and fight and fight.
Believe and believe and believe.

Even when
you are no longer
Ten



Amy Kelley

Real music is not for wealth, not for
honors or even the joys of the mind...but
is a path for realization and salvation.

Ali Akbar Khan

Blind

Your eyes
are shadows
of a million thoughts.

Some
probably never spoken
and some only to be assumed.

Beautiful
yet confused.

Windows
to your soul.

Clear
easy to see into
yet rarely open.

I desire
to share in the confusion
of the unspoken, the unknown.

Creating the Comparison/Contrast Essay

Oh, the joy of writing! The art of writing seems so easy for English teachers, but what about students? Some teachers become so engulfed in their own abilities that they forget to bridge the gap of inability to ability for students. For myself, I have been trapped in this situation many times. I think, "I know how to do it, but how do I break it down for them?" More importantly, I have also pondered on how to make the assignments interesting to students.

About two years ago, I devised an "experiment" to teach the "dreaded" comparison/contrast essay. I gave an assignment to my tenth grade English class, which was to read two myths in their American Literature text. After reading "How the World Was Made" and "The Sky Tree," students were asked to write a compare/contrast essay about how the two Native American tribes had different beliefs concerning how the world was created. Without any direct instruction from me, students were asked to write an outline and a rough draft after they "brainstormed."

As they wrote during two class periods (45 minute classes), I roamed around the room to evaluate papers and solicit questions. However, my response to each question was, "What do you think?" Then, on the third day, I allowed students to work in groups to make corrections and solicit opinions from their peers. It was not until the fourth day that I began direct instruction.

The fourth day, I showed a transparency of a student-written outline. I would point at specific areas on the outline, and the students made corrections aloud. After

correcting the outline on the transparency, students were asked to rewrite their outlines while making their own corrections.

While they tended to their outlines, I evaluated the rough drafts individually. On the fifth day, students wrote their final copies while using my suggestions from the day before. After students completed the process, I taught them how to type a title page using MLA guidelines. Luckily, after I worked a deal with the computer lab instructor, the class was able to type their papers.

On the sixth day, final papers were submitted. Students had been allowed to learn from each other while in groups, from the teacher who solicited rhetorical questions, from typing, and through a trial-and-error process. My energy was saved because I did not teach with direct instruction from beginning to end. Students used dictionaries, and some consulted a thesaurus. The structured "do this" environment was interrupted by group work. After all, if students refused to listen to adults, then maybe they would listen to each other.

Furthermore, I believe that using student-written examples on transparencies, rather than textbook-generated examples, created a comfortable feeling that reduced anxiety. Each student saw that his/her peers were not perfect. However, I did add one component when I tried this again last school year, visual aids. Students were required to illustrate and present their essays. This moved the assignment from the experimental stage to the proven stage. Students learned how to write better essays and learned the revision process from each other! Creation of the comparison/contrast was completed on the sixth day, and on the seventh day, I rested.



Alaina Lett

The whole business is built on ego, vanity,
self-satisfaction, and it's total crap to pretend
it's not.

George Michael

Indispensable Woman

When did I become so valuable?
All of a sudden I'm the one everyone turns to.
They seem to think I can do it all.
I'm my own daycare; I always seem to have mine and everyone else's.
I chauffeur the old, buying groceries and making doctors' appointments.
I'm the math tutor for kindergarten through trig.
I'm the novice artist to help my son with his drawings.
I'm the room mom at daycare and always a chaperone.
I'm the one everyone calls to either proofread or type (or both) their children's papers.
I'm the novice coordinator and baker who organizes baby showers, wedding receptions,
and designs kids' games and cakes for their parties.
I wonder how I found time to accumulate these skills among so many people's requests.
I'm the house painter, both inside and out.
I'm the novice plumber who can change a showerhead and help install a toilet.
I'm the Spades partner everyone wants.
I'm the laborer who installs carpet and vinyl.
I'm the novice mechanic who rotates tires, checks fluids, and changes batteries, spark
plugs and windshield wipers.
I'm the family photographer.
I'm the novice carpenter who owns a Dremmel, a jig saw, and knows the difference
between a Phillip's and a flat head.
I'm the one who's called for quick, last-minute cleanings or if the furniture needs
rearranging.
I'm the expert bargain-hunter, and if I can't find it on Saturday morning, then it can't be
found.
When did I become so valuable?
If I refused, I wouldn't be the one everyone turns to.
But, they seem to think I can do it all, so why should I tell them that I can't?

“To Be or Not to Be:” Research Papers Should Certainly Be

Despite the time restraints that confine many instructors, teaching freshman composition is filled with endless opportunities. I am amazed, and simultaneously appalled, when some instructors are disheartened to find themselves teaching composition classes. In a composition class, I am free. I am free to choose assignments based on what I enjoy, provided that I adhere to departmental requirements. When first hired as an adjunct instructor, I was told that one of my requirements for English 102, the second half of freshman composition, was a research paper. Rather than feeling frustration, I was gratified. Something that I was taught ten years ago is still relevant to today's college students. Many people find my perspective absurd; one of my greatest joys about English 102 is knowing that I get to teach research papers and I can teach them my way. I can use my own experiences to help my students.

Many high schools no longer require a formal research paper prior to students' graduation, even though I began working on “traditional” research papers in the tenth grade in 1994. I was blessed to have a middle-aged teacher whose daughter was experiencing the college realizations of what she didn't learn in high school. And to this teacher's credit, she wanted her students to be more prepared than her own child had been. I was fortunate enough to have been given strict guidelines about research papers by this woman. I was taught that research is a process: brainstorming, researching and preparing index cards, the actual writing process, and proofreading to prevent plagiarism. Instead of being thrust into the middle of that process, I received step-by-step instruction regarding how she wanted us to complete that research process. This blessed instruction

makes teaching the research paper an ordinary task, and I believe that my faith in teaching a detailed research process is what alleviates much of my students' anxiety about what they are required to accomplish. I don't assign anything about a research paper that I don't thoroughly explain first.

Students are required to complete a five-to-eight page paper, not including their works cited page. We talk about the research paper on the first day of class, and we do not stop talking about it until the assignment's due date. Because I can only dissuade procrastination and not stop it, I only require that a general topic be definite at the early stages of the assignment. Before the first month of class ends, I require general topics to be definite, but not the thesis statements; therefore, I know that I have given them time to think about the paper, whether or not they use this time wisely. Even the most diligent students sometimes find that what they initially believed to be interesting and workable thesis statements may become boring, trite, or difficult to work with. I encourage students to accept that a thesis sentence is a work in progress and can be changed at any point prior to pressing the computer's print button.

Students are taught ways to accomplish the ultimate goal of completing their papers. However, I do allow leniency because I know that each person works differently and at his or her own pace; therefore, I require proof of their attempts at work, but I do not require an entire rough draft per se. Nonetheless, I continuously encourage my students to show whatever they are working on and ask questions.

During class, either students may opt to use traditional note and bibliography cards, or they may develop an annotated bibliography, but they must do one or the other.

I thoroughly explain both methods because today's college courses are requiring annotated bibliographies, although I feel that index cards are far more useful, even if they are outdated and time-consuming. I find that index cards dissuade plagiarism and writing anxiety because they later provide a quick reference to exact quotes when students begin the actual writing process.

Another reason I teach both methods is that some of my students are older and haven't been in school for years, and they were taught that note taking for research papers was done with index cards. Remembering my beloved teacher who cared enough to help us, I want my students to use the methods that best work for them. Still, I also want them to comprehend the more modern methods of research.

Research papers are much easier to complete on word processors than on traditional typewriters. I am thankful for technology and that my English department requires that students receive library and computer instruction from the campus librarian. Students have no excuse not to find time to go to the library for research. I always create my syllabus so that instructional days are a requirement, and students cannot bypass my discussion of what I demand of their papers. By the time they reach the library, I know what topics they have chosen and how I may help them find useful, critical sources.

I have found that my students initially fear the dreaded research paper; many have even postponed English 102 until their senior year of college because they know a research paper will be required. But English wasn't the only course for which I was required to complete a research paper, and I feel certain that is true for many other disciplines. Research is important in all content areas, and I am confident that my

students appreciate my time-consuming discussion about exactly what I want from their papers. I am providing my students with the basic ability to complete step-by-step tasks and productive research that will be beneficial to them in any discipline they might pursue.

The Shadow of My Heart

Often I think of you.

Your memory is my shadow, and I observe you everywhere.

You do not often speak of days forever gone, yet

Visions of our past haunt me with an elusive happiness.

Your memory forces me to consider what is important.

You talk of faith and of honesty, and I try to focus.

Your perseverance walks with me through difficult times.

Your strength helps me to endure what I think I cannot stand.

Your heartfelt laughter brings joyous tears to my eyes.

Your generosity helps me to believe in endless possibilities.

Your love is spoken through kind deeds and not empty words.

Walking, I see my shadow, and I am grateful you are near.



Lisa Light

You are the music while the music lasts.

T.S. Elliot

Accelerated Reader in the Middle School:
Use It or Lose It?

“Steven used to read all the time; now he hates it,” states his mother sadly.

“I’d rather hang out with my friends,” remarks Kathy, a spunky seventh grader overly concerned with her hair and makeup.

“My teacher will only let me read books in my zone. I feel I’m being punished because I have a high reading level. There are some cool books below my zone I’d really like to read, but I can’t,” replies Kyle, a frustrated eighth grader.

Ever heard these comments before? If you are a middle school teacher, chances are you probably have. I serve as the Reading Coach/Reading Intervention teacher for our middle school. I should be the epitome of reading, “The Reading Lady,” the walking “Knower of All Things About Reading” -- in essence, an advocate for promoting reading in and out of school. I am those things to some extent. However, I find myself in a dilemma concerning our school’s use of the Accelerated Reader™ (AR) program. To be honest, I am ready to toss it out the window.

AR has been adopted by many schools to serve as their primary reading program or as a supplement to their existing program. The premise of AR is that students will be motivated to read more and better books. In addition, AR claims this will help create lifelong readers. The program consists of computerized reading tests to correlate with books that have been assigned a reading level and point value. Students set reading goals, read books, take tests, and accumulate points. Students may use accumulated points to purchase incentives and rewards.

Prior to attending middle school, students in our two elementary schools use AR. Reading records forwarded to us indicate a high percentage of students who have reached their personal point goals. By the time students enter sixth grade, many are no longer interested in reading for points and rewards. By seventh and eighth grades, reading motivation dwindles even more.

Typical student responses such as “I’m just tired of AR,” “I don’t like taking a test each time I read a book,” “I feel forced to read,” or “I don’t like to read anymore” indicate we are no longer engaging their interest. Even some parents grumble: “...too much homework” and “...no time for independent reading at home.” In addition, parents often complain about high AR point goals. These complaints force teachers to struggle with fostering a love of reading, holding students accountable for their reading, and establishing a balanced language arts program. In addition, our administrators remind us that our school system has spent thousands of dollars on AR quizzes, S.T.A.R. testing (a computerized program that complements AR designed to determine student reading levels), and AR books to support the program.

Our intentions have been good--increase the amount of reading, offer extrinsic rewards to hopefully increase intrinsic reading motivation, and create lifelong readers. Has this worked? Not for most of our students. Can we abandon this costly program that has stocked our library with hundreds of books? Not completely. Therefore, as much as many would like to “lose” the program, we must find a way to “use” it to best meet the needs of our students.

At the end of last year, our AR Committee along with our English department

head and media specialist, decided to make necessary modifications in our existing implementation of AR. The following are highlights of new changes we feel will promote a more positive reading environment throughout our school:

Oxford Middle School
Accelerated Reader Plan

Existing AR Requirements

- Individual point goals
- No genre requirements
- Grading: 10% of English grade
¾ of the 10% derived from %
of point goal met
¼ of the 10% derived from
accuracy
- Earn points for AR Store

REVISED AR Requirements

- No point goals
- 1 fiction + 1 non-fiction book
each 9 weeks – student choice
- Grading: Count as 2 test grades
for Reading in the Content Area
Classes – Teachers will take
highest grade from fiction and
non-fiction categories
- Students may continue to earn
points for AR Store

Beginning in the 2003-2004 school year, we will inform students and parents of these new changes. In addition, teachers will place more focus on allowing students to select non-AR books for reading pleasure. Because of new content area reading classes added to our schedule, English teachers should have more time to implement class novels and literature discussions into their instruction. These new changes should produce a more relaxed reading atmosphere. Grading remains an issue we must continue to address. To ensure accountability, we will continue to use AR as part of students' reading grades.

Our hopes are that as reading motivation increases, grading of AR will become an unnecessary component.

In defense of AR, it is not the program that is insufficient. It is merely the misuse by educators that has become the primary problem. When used in the elementary grades as a tool for motivation, AR can be a wonderful resource. However, at the middle school level, we must strive to find a better approach to develop a love of reading in young adolescents. Therefore, at our middle school, we will continue to “use” AR to promote amount of reading, book discussions, and lifelong readers, but “lose” the rigidity and competitiveness we have forced upon our students in the past. As a result, we hope to see more of our middle school students reading for enjoyment, not points.

Twelve

Days filled with hopscotch and Barbies

Ponytails bouncing freely

Rosy cheeks

Young girls

Merely children

Embraced with

Innocence and simplicity

Laughter abounds

Filly pink dresses with satin ribbons

And matching bows

Fluffy tutus

Worn ballet slippers

All tucked away

Maybe forgotten

Or perhaps

Discarded and replaced

Youthful attributes

Slipping away

Sadly

In exchange for

Multi-colored streaked hair

Straight

Limp

No ribbons – no bows

Red flirtatious lips

Rouged cheeks

Midriff blouses

Tight low-rise jeans

Platform shoes

Young girls

Merely children

Provocative for their age

Hanging out

At the 7-Eleven

Older boys

With certain intentions

Surround them

Twelve



Melissa Marsh

...It's about heart. It's about feelings, and
moving people, and something beautiful, and
being alive...Play the sunset

Mr. Holland's Opus

Old-Timer

Old-Timer
Sun-browned skin

Liberty overalls
Pocket watch

Beard Stubble
Tickles my face

Happy to see me
Sad when I'm gone

Red Man tobacco
Spit on the ground

Juicy Fruit gum
Left breast pocket

Old bright eyes
Seen it all

Happy to see him
Sad when he's gone

Walking

He smiles, large front teeth showing
as he rises, wobbling to his soft thick feet.

His arms are outstretched, first reaching for me
and then for the balance that exists in the air around him.

Quickly, he places one foot solidly in front of the other,
wanting to run, his body not yet allowing this freedom.

He pauses, the sunlight catching his sparse red hairs
and setting them alight.

He is smiling still, and a long glistening strand of baby sugar
falls slowly to the floor and is instantly dissolved into the carpet.

He chuckles as his steps bring him
and his sweet, clean smell closer to me.

He falls, breathless, trusting,
and exhilarated into my arms.



Heather Mitchell

It's easy to play any musical instrument: all you have to do is touch the right key at the right time and the instrument will play itself.

J.S. Bach

I Used to... But Now...

I used to enjoy time alone,
But now quiet time is rare.

I used to eat out in sit-down restaurants,
But now it is pick up or delivery.

I used to enjoy surfing the channels,
But now I am limited to two.

I used to enjoy long relaxing baths,
But now I shower in no time flat.

I used to enjoy reading a good book,
But now I read several a night.

I used to just teach 8 hours a day,
But now I am a teacher 24.

I used to go to bed each night by 8 o'clock,
But now I am lucky if it's before midnight.

I used to be just a wife,
But now I am also a mother!
And I would not change a thing.

Red Lights and Chick-Chick

Last fall, my son began attending a local church preschool. My husband and I went to the orientation, met his teacher, Mrs. Traci (someone we both knew), and learned about the setup of the center and a little about how his class would be conducted. It was during this meeting we were introduced to the "red light/ green light" strategy of classroom management. This meant that if the teacher had to correct the child's behavior one time, the child's clothespin would be moved to the yellow light; and if the behavior reoccurred, the clothespin would then be moved to red. Then we returned two nights later and brought a very excited little boy to see where he would be attending "school."

A few weeks into the school year, the newness had worn off, and Wil began acting at school the way we knew him as a very rambunctious and very talkative child. Wil came home with his clothespin being moved to the red light for several days in a row. Being a concerned parent, I called the teacher, and she said he was talking in class and during quiet time. I was not surprised. After all, he was my son, and I was the one that received N's, or "needs improvement," in conduct for not working quietly in elementary school. I thanked her for her time and knew this had to stop.

My husband and I sat down and came up with a consequence and/or reward Wil could receive for the lights. We felt they were fair because, after all, this was his first time in a structured setting, but he had to learn to behave well before he entered kindergarten the next year. We sat him down and explained to him that we thought we would try rewarding him on green light days by allowing him to pick the dinner that night. However, if he were on yellow, he would not be able to pick our dinner, and he

would lose his cartoon privileges that night. For those red light days, a spanking would be added to the loss of TV. Knowing that, for the most part, he was a compliant child who feared disapproval and would be crushed if he could not watch *Justice League* (his favorite cartoon about superheroes), he would hopefully work to stay on green light.

This worked for a few weeks; then, he came home with several days of yellow or red lights. Then the days turned into weeks. His problems in the classroom were for the same behaviors, talking during quiet time, adding comments during other children's stories, and talking when Ms. Traci was talking. So, Mark and I tried to sweeten the deal a little by telling him that on green light days he could have his favorite eat-out meal. He loved chick-chick and fries from where else, McDonald's. This new incentive seemed to work until the weather began getting warmer; then the pattern of yellow and red light days began again.

It became a running joke with friends that what we ate for dinner each night depended on the behavior of a four year old, but we were consistent. Then, toward the end of April, he began only bringing home green light notes, and his teacher began sending notes home describing how attentive and well-behaved he had been at school. We began having great nights at our house and *lots* of McDonald's food for dinner. We asked Wil what had helped him stay on green light every day, and in the words of an almost five year old, "My name is on the birthday chart, and I really would like a new Transformer (a toy that he can 'transform' from one object to another), and when I am not on green light, we don't go to Wal-Mart."

My son Wil, who turned five two weeks later, is a blond-headed, blue-eyed ball of energy. He loves to explore and hear stories being read to him. He loves to "read" to me. He expresses himself with as much flare and drama as any actor in Hollywood. He is very articulate with his ideas and outspoken with his opinions. When it comes to compassion for others, his heart outweighs his childlike frame. He is the child who has challenged my ideas about children and discipline.

I was brought up in a home where spankings were given when deserved and lectures were real soul-getters. I have never been opposed to spanking a child, but when this precious miracle was placed into my hands in May 1998, I could not imagine raising a hand to him. Then he turned two. After he learned he was the child and that sore bottoms were no fun, things improved around our house. Now, just taking away privileges seems to work best.

I think just as their sleep patterns change when they are babies, their behavior needs also change. I also believe in preventing the behaviors by stating expectations. Parents can help children by reading books on honesty and responsibility by modeling appropriate behaviors. Parents need to be able to change with the needs of their children; remember, they are children first, and expectations have to be altered accordingly.

Self-Esteem and Literature in Today's Classroom

As a teacher, I have always believed in the power of the printed word. Printed words tell us what to do, how to do something, and why we do many of the tasks we do. But it was not until I began teaching students with behavior disorders that I realized the power that print can have on our thoughts and our behaviors.

Four years ago, I was given the extraordinary task of working with middle school-aged students with known self-esteem issues and severe behavior problems. I was at a loss as to how to reach these children. So after a few get-to-know-you activities and no other materials, I began reading to them. I read them a book about two friends who argued about what to buy with their birthday money and how they resolved the issue. I was amazed at the responses. This book opened a student-led classroom discussion. These children had not been exposed to a book like this before. They began discussing their own friendships that had soured and personal situations that did not end as peacefully as the one in the book. I knew at this point what the class focus had to be, literature. The use of bibliotherapy in the classroom gives students a sense of realization of their problems. It also improves their self-esteem and confidence in dealing with situations. The third benefit is that literature can teach self-advocacy.

Many of these children do not realize they have a disability. Students with behavior disorders have no physical or mental problems many times. Their problems are socially related. Problems arise during day-to-day situations, arguments, and communication with peers and adults. By reading about situations, they begin to connect

the literature with real-life situations. It gives them ideas on how to resolve the conflicts without anger and violence. Students with poor social skills need direct instruction on how to deal with peer situations. One student I had the first year I taught this class was a sixth-grade repeater and was only given the label of ED (Emotionally Disturbed) in April of the school year before. He was a smart, nice-looking kid that had ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). His primary problem was that he could not appropriately interact with teachers or peers. After he spent one month in my class openly discussing and learning about his disability, his behavior referrals decreased dramatically. We read several books about students with similar problems to his, and the readings gave him a better understanding of what he was experiencing. He began to become more aware of his comments toward others and began using the strategies we were learning to better manage his behavior.

I also use the books to increase the students' self-esteem. I have found through research that behaviors are a result of how comfortable we are with ourselves. Many of these students also have low self-esteem. I have found many books to build a student's morale. One very important issue we covered was accepting the differences in others as well as themselves. Throughout the year, as the students participated in more self-awareness activities such as writing poetry and creating a newspaper about themselves, they became more comfortable with who they were, and many of their attention-getting behaviors in the classrooms decreased.

The third thing literature can accomplish in the classroom is to teach self-advocacy. Once students can acknowledge their needs, they need to have the

communication skills to convey them to others. Through the use of literature and role-playing situations, the students are given the power to become advocates for themselves. Many of these students may be behind academically. In our class, we openly talk about how we all need various items such as graphic organizers, visual aids, or sometimes peer assistance to help us learn to our best potential. Some academic concepts they can get on their own, but there may also be something the teacher can do to assist. We read about people who have had to have such assistance and ways they have worked out their problems. This gives the students appropriate ways of handling things for themselves. The students really enjoy reading about famous people who have dealt with adversities and have had problems similar to those they have. These readings also give the students hope of overcoming some of these problems. We also read several books dealing with the discovery and advocacy of people with behavioral problems. Reading these things has shown students that they are not alone.

Since I have been working with these students and literature to directly teach social skills, improve self-esteem and promote self-advocacy, the inappropriate behaviors have declined. The students feel a sense of control about their feelings and actions after the classroom discussions. Once their behaviors are more controlled, their grades will begin improving, and poor behaviors will start to disappear.



Cathy Noye

Everyone has talent. What is rare is the
courage to follow the talent to the dark place
where it leads.

Erica Jong

Teaching *Beowulf* in an Urban Setting

English Literature is difficult to understand when one is not familiar with Old English and the cultural behaviors of the Anglo-Saxons, Greeks, French, and Romans. I find it very challenging to teach my students how to understand and appreciate this literature.

Because today's generation relies on digital, visual images, and heavy computer technology, finding a way to make English literature interesting in any urban setting takes a creative mind. Thanks to the "trial and error approach," I have found a wonderfully creative and innovative way to teach *Beowulf*, an epic poem about good versus evil. I use journalistic writing to accomplish this task. My students create a newspaper that reports on one of the battles that Beowulf fights in the epic.

This activity is based on several research-based strategies. For example, the assignment contains reading/writing connections because the lead story in the newspaper is based on the student's understanding of an epic hero and his characteristics, as well as the events within the battle itself, whether they were implied or stated. Also, there are cross-curriculum connections. Because English literature is history based, the students must research and learn the development, extent, and breakup of the *British Empire*, which often involves their historical knowledge.

Before the newspaper is constructed, I give my urban students a strong, solid background of the epic and the characteristics of an epic hero. The students must understand the literary and cultural explanations of oral history and oral entertainment. After this has been accomplished, the newspaper comes alive for the urban student.

After reading and discussing *Beowulf* with my students, I place them into groups. Next, I assign each group a particular battle on which to focus for their newspaper. Then, I give them a list of specific things that their edition must contain. Finally, I give them time and space to be as creative as they want to be.

***Beowulf* and the newspaper**

The newspaper must include the following:

- Based on one of the battles in *Beowulf*
 - Beowulf vs Grendel
 - Beowulf vs Grendel's mother
 - Beowulf vs the Dragon
- Catchy headline
- Precise news story (who, what, when, where, why, and how)
- Any component of a newspaper (obituary, editorial, sports page, etc)
- Advertisement (only products that are significant to the time period)
- Graphics and pictures (hand-drawn or computer made)

* * Allow the students to be as creative as they want to be.

This activity is an excellent way to teach several of the writing modes. For example, the lead story must be written in expository form. The advertisements must use the descriptive/persuasive form, and the editorials also use the persuasive form, which teaches the students how to express their opinions in writing. Because this is a newspaper edition, all of the students must do their part for the paper to be a success.

Teaching *Beowulf* in an urban setting is challenging, but it is not impossible. Using the production of a student-generated newspaper of the different battles enhances the student's understanding of an epic, the characteristics of an epic hero, the cultural history in *Beowulf*, and the students' confidence in their ability to write.

Teaching Descriptive Writing to Hesitant Writers

Teaching in an urban setting is very different from teaching in a county or rural setting. Most of my students receive free lunches and live in government housing projects. I am expressing these facts about my students because they are very vocal about the fact that they "hate to write." For the first five years of my teaching career, teaching my students to express themselves in writing was a very tedious chore. Through much prayer and many hours of trial and error, I finally found a solution that works for my students and helps me to successfully teach writing to the "haters of writing."

Two days before the writing projects begin, I will do several listening skill games and teach my students the difference between hearing and listening (i.e., hearing is instinctive, and listening is comprehensive). After 80% of my students have successfully completed the listening skills tasks, I will tell them to gather their notebooks and a writing instrument; then, I will escort them to the side of the school building called "the one-way," named "the one-way" because it is a one-way street and a place of gathering before and after school for the students. Before I turn them loose, I will give them some very specific instructions.

Instructions

You are to take a look around out here. What do you see? What do you hear? Is there something out here now that was not out here when you came to school this morning? Has the change caused a positive, negative, or no change at all to your surroundings?

You may walk 50 feet in any direction you choose. However, you can't talk or discuss anything with your neighbor or friend. You can only write notes to yourself on your paper.

Then, I will give them 5 minutes outside to do what I just instructed them to do.

Note: Possible changes that have occurred since they came to school.

In the morning around the school, there is so much clutter and confusion. For example, parents and the school buses are dropping off students. Many sightseers are driving in front of the school playing loud music from their cars, and the sidewalks in front of the school are always covered with anxiously awaiting students in uniforms.

After the 5 minutes are up, we will go back inside, and they will begin to write something as soon as they sit down. Most of the students usually begin by turning their notes into lists or some other organizational structure. For example, they may make lists on the things they saw or the things they heard. After they have completed their lists or note organizations, they will then begin to conform their lists or organizations into a three-paragraph paper that will include an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. I only require a three-paragraph essay because this is their first writing assignment of the year and I am trying to get them used to the idea of writing essays. Later on in the year, the students must expand this three-paragraph essay into a five-paragraph essay.

All of the students know that their first paper will always be considered a rough draft, regardless of how “good” they think that it is. They understand that it can have as many errors as they would like because it will not be used as a “major grade.” I will always share my draft first, so they won’t feel pressured or become stressed out about sharing. I always allow them to critique my writing because I want them to know that their opinions are important, to see if they were listening, and to give them practice in expressing critical thoughts. I respond to, or assess, their rough drafts by allowing them to read their work aloud, and I give them a precise verbal assessment; then, two students

can give them a constructive response also. After they rewrite their rough drafts, they will turn them in, and I will grade them by an established rubric that has been presented to them prior to their rewrite.

The students are usually always amazed at how much they love to write and at how creative their writing is. The students also learn to like and trust their inner voices. With this assignment, I always learn about my students' environments, learning and writing styles. I also learn, from my colleagues, that my students' grades improve greatly in their other classes also when they learn how to express themselves in writing.



Lori Shaffer

From the breeze on the mountain to the lake of deep blue;
From the waterfall down to the sea
Never changing or ending on the voice of the wind
Sing the dark song of Erenn to me.

"Wind on Sea" Anuna

The One

Everything changed after the Third Great War.

The war had been fought on home soil, and the effects were devastating. Three-fourths of the population had been obliterated, crops and forestlands burned to ashes, and natural resources destroyed. Life was bleak and barren, and no one knew what to do. Homes were demolished, and people lived on the streets, diseased and starving, while the country crumbled around them.

The war had been won, but this desolation was the price they had paid. Something had to be done, and the government had an idea.

It was a radical idea, but hard times call for drastic measures, as the saying goes, and who would oppose them? The starving homeless? The dead?

Democracy was overthrown out of necessity. The government took control over everything in order to save what little was left, and the public, glad for the hope of a hot meal and bath, said nothing against them as they watched this change sweep over them.

Everyone able to work was assigned an occupation according to their skills, and the young were sent to school to learn what the government told them to learn, to prepare them for their own assignment.

The arts were deemed unnecessary, as music and sculptures didn't feed the people or rebuild their cities, and life was a scarce resource in these hard times. No one could be spared.

Anyone too sick to work with little or no hope of improvement was quickly disposed of, not out of cruelty but necessity. They could only afford to feed and house

those who worked to improve the life around them.

The few who opposed this change, who voiced their opinions, were quickly silenced, never to be heard from again. The phrase "For the good of the whole" was repeated over and over, written on street signs, printed on banners posted on each corner, and shouted in speeches the government delivered habitually on the evening news.

It wasn't long before life began to prosper once again. Death and sickness sank to a bare minimum. Crime was almost nonexistent, and unemployment had been abolished. The change was slow but certainly noticeable, and the people saw this. They rejoiced in their success, singing praises of their glorious government that had saved them from certain destruction.

And the government heard them. They smiled.

It also wasn't long before the government realized they liked control. They liked the power they held over the small insignificant people beneath them. Though they had not planned it, they decided there was no need to return to democracy, for they now prospered as they never had before in this efficient new society. "For the good of the whole" became the country's doctrine, and everything was devoted to that one goal.

Children were tested when they reached high school, and their scores determined what their lifelong profession would be. At age eighteen, all knew what the rest of their lives would hold for them.

Marriage was forbidden, as marriage almost always led to children, unauthorized births, in the government's eyes. Any marriages allowed to take place were arranged by the government alone, who matched the partners genetically to produce the strongest and

healthiest children possible.

Arts were also banned, except for the mild, propaganda-based songs and artwork that the government produced. Education, too, was altered. History and literature were modified, eliminating any evidence of the people's democratic past. The government feared that if people knew what they once were, they would soon wish to revisit their past and take control once more.

In this new society, there was one crime, acting as an individual. There was one punishment, death. It was a simple rule, and people obeyed religiously.

It was not long before people began to forget, and once more, the government, who forgot nothing, smiled.

.

Cathan stared at the letter in hand. 'Military...' Of all the things they could've chosen for her to be! Why would they choose this? She wasn't especially strong or brave, and yet, here it was looking back at her from the crisp white paper with the distinct official red letterhead as she read it over and over again.

"Citizen # 354-76-9876-1 is chosen to serve our country in the duty of military soldier. Her position shall be determined following training..." It went on to say when she was to report to duty as well as to which troop she had been assigned. She had already memorized all of that information, but that didn't matter to her at the moment. Her eyes couldn't get past that first sentence.

"Serve our country," she thought. That was her duty, and everyone should be proud of his duty. It was up to every citizen to work for the good of the whole, "the

betterment of the whole by the contribution of the one.” She had learned that phrase in kindergarten, and it still sounded in her head each day, reminding her of her duty. She was contributing to the great joint effort that kept her country going. It was an honor and a privilege to participate in such a great effort. So why was she disappointed? Why was she dreading it? Why was she consciously questioning their judgment and authority?

Cathan rose and walked to the mirror that hung on the far wall of her room. Standing in front of her reflection, she studied herself, looking for any sign of soldier that might be present in her face, but she could see none. She stood an average height of 5’ 6”, and she was pleasantly slim--definitely fit but not muscular by any means. Her chestnut-colored hair hung in gentle waves to her shoulders, matching almost perfectly the color of her almond-shaped eyes. She sighed. Whatever it was that they saw in her, she couldn’t find it.

Looking back to the letter, her eyes grazed the page until she found the other statement that had affected her, “is ordered to abstain from marriage and prohibited from childbearing for the duration of her life.” She would live alone. Never would she take a husband or hold her own child in her arms. Though she knew it was for the best and that unauthorized births would result in an uncontrolled population, which would throw their entire system off balance, she couldn’t help but feel a small loss as she reread the words, “prohibited...for the duration of her life.” She sighed. ‘But it isn’t my life, is it?’ She rose, laying the paper on the nightstand near her bed, without even realizing the significance of the words she had just thought. As she crossed through her doorway, she

recited faithfully "For the good of the whole," as she had done ever since she had begun talking. It was the first phrase children were taught.

"I leave in the morning, Grandfather." Cathan swept a stray lock of brown hair from her eyes even as she realized it would be shorn very short the next day, and the thought saddened her somehow.

If it hadn't been for Cathan, her grandfather would have been committed to the elderly quarters long ago. She knew, though, that the day she left, her mother would arrange to have him sent away permanently, and the thought saddened her as she looked into his aged grey eyes.

"I know." His voice was weak, and for the first time in her life, Cathan realized exactly how old and feeble he had become. He shifted in his chair to face her and his thin, pale hands strained as he lifted his body. She could see the wrinkles and veins dotted with age spots. He wouldn't be allowed to live much longer. He was outliving his usefulness, and the country wouldn't support him forever.

"I don't want to go." She hadn't planned to say it. In fact, she hadn't even been able to admit it to herself, yet she knew it now as she stood before the old man, who always had a way of bringing the truth out of her. She'd always found she could be honest with him, and it was her heart speaking and not her mind as she neared him. "I really don't."

"I know that, too, child, but it gladdens me to see that you can say it. You've got more strength than I ever had. I didn't agree with anything they did, but I kept silent to

save my neck. I speak now only because I am old with nothing else to live for--nothing to lose. My strength is actually my weakness. I know they'll kill me soon, anyway, so I no longer fear them. But you, child, you have something only your father had."

"I wish I could've known him longer," she whispered, afraid now of her own thoughts.

"Cathan, there's something you should know...something that no one else will tell you." He paused for a moment, as if listening to be certain that Cathan's mother was nowhere nearby. "Your father chose to die."

"What do you mean? He was killed in the last Great War," Cathan replied, the quavering in her own voice frightening her, as she knew from the look in her grandfather's eyes that there was more to it than that.

"No, Cathan. He was captured, but he wasn't killed. At least, not at first."

Cathan's eyes grew wide as she listened.

"He was captured by a country that didn't dominate their people as ours does. They let them choose their own lives." He noticed the shock on her pale face as she listened and added, "That's right. You could marry who you wanted and have as many children as you liked. You chose your own occupation, too. Even as a prisoner of war, your father loved their freedom so much, he died rather than return home." He saw the confusion on his granddaughter's young face. "They gave him an ultimatum, Cathan. Come home or die. He died."

She couldn't believe what her grandfather was saying. Maybe her mother was right, and he was a crazy old loon. She had been foolish to think that she knew what to do

better than the government, to question them. Maybe it was good that she and her grandfather would both be leaving tomorrow. He'd always told her nothing but these fanciful lies, so her mother said, anyway. "I...I have to go, Grandfather," she muttered and rose to leave, but he grabbed her arm and squeezed it tightly, not allowing her to go.

"Listen to what I say, child! Listen!" he hissed and waited until she was still before he continued. "Never let 'em get your mind, Cathan! They may own your body, but they can never touch your mind, not if you don't let 'em."

He stopped, and she jerked her arm away, slowly backing out of the room until she finally turned and ran upstairs, ignoring his calls for her in the background.

That night, Cathan lay awake, her grandfather's words echoing again and again in her mind. "Never let 'em get your mind, Cathan...they can never touch your mind..." She knew what he said was wrong. You did everything for the good of the whole, and anything done singularly – selfishly – was wrong, an act against the entire country. It was her duty to do all that she could to help her country and her fellow citizens. Who was she to have an opinion of her own? Who was she but another small, single citizen? If all citizens held their own separate opinions and beliefs, it would create nothing but chaos, and what good could come from chaos? She knew the laws. She knew the penalties. She knew her duty and every other citizen's duty. She knew her grandfather was crazy and would be put away as soon as she left...and she knew that he was right.

Somewhere deep within her was something Cathan had always been aware of, yet she had never fully understood what it was or what it meant. It had appeared when she

was younger, and it had grown along with her. It had caused her to inwardly question the laws she voicelessly obeyed, even as a child. Of course, she had told no one except her grandfather, the only person she could trust with such severe confessions, and he had only sparked this substance with his stories of old. It was this substance inside her that stirred now more than ever.

‘Why must I be a soldier?’ she asked herself as she tossed about on her small, wooden bed. ‘What is it inside of me that they see to fit this duty?’ Suddenly, a thought hit her like fifty hard bricks, and she shuddered. Perhaps they, too, saw this dim light of her growing inner life and wished to see it destroyed--destroyed on the battlefield if need be. Perhaps they did know. It would be simple enough to arrange her death within the army’s orders, to make it look like an accident. Again, she shuddered. She knew then she must tell no one of her thoughts...her thoughts...

Were they her thoughts alone? Was she really the only one out there which thought on these things, or were there other lighted substances in other citizens’ minds, as well?



Janet Smart

Put your ear down close to your soul and
listen hard.

Anne Sexton

Her Life: Rachel

Rachel, my youngest daughter, is thirty-two years old. She is the most fascinating woman I've ever met. She is an artist and works as a mosaicist at the Anniston Museum of Natural History. Rachel is tall and dark complexioned. She has long, smooth hair that reaches her waist. She is slim and striking. Don't bother to receive any attention if Rachel is in the room; she has her public.

At twenty-two, she called me from the Atlanta Airport to tell me she was leaving for New York City with a man she had met at a New Age Conference called "Spiral," an alternative life-styles association reminiscent of the old Hippie commune. The man, a magician, wanted her to go to New York with him. What do you do when a child calls from so far away? Say no? Come home! Anyway, that was a notable road trip for her. The man turned out to be famous in a way: he had won "Magician of the Year" that year. (He now directs performance artists at Caesar's in Vegas).

She was gone for months and, afterwards, returned to the city several times. While there, she traveled in that elite group of Broadway actors and attended many cast parties. One night, my phone rang, and Rachel said, "There's someone here who wants to talk to you." She was at an after-show party with the cast of *Cats*.

Someone said, "Hello, Janet? This is Tony Bennett, and I just love your daughter's Southern accent. Say something to me."

I said, "Ha! Tony Bennett, eh? Whatever. Put Rachel back on the phone."

Rachel said, "Mother! You just spoke to Tony Bennett!"

After thinking for a second, I realized I had, indeed.

I first knew something was different about Rachel when she was an infant, but it occurred to me that she was truly a nonconformist when she got to college. She was an art major then and came home with photographs of a sculpture of a woman's nude torso. It looked familiar to me, and then it dawned on me. That was my daughter's naked torso. A couple of guys, artist buddies, had covered her with plaster of Paris where she remained stationary for an hour or so until they cracked her open. I was horrified. She could disrobe in front of boys?

"It's just an art thing, Mom," she said.

Rachel has extraordinary musical gifts. She has been an instrumentalist in a soft rock band (guitar, dulcimer, flute), designed tee shirt motifs, gone out with an "American Gladiator" (she met him on the beach), worked as a masseuse, contracted work with the Louisiana State Wildlife Commission (she designed several highway signs for state parks), worked archaeology digs, and the list goes on.

She takes risks that most of us would never try. Her latest stunt is perhaps the scariest and riskiest of all: she met, fell in love with, and married a Palestinian man, born and raised on the Gaza Strip. She is now Rachel Shawa. I call this the scariest risk because I don't think she realizes the hefty burden of prejudice she now faces from folks in this part of the world. I worry that this young couple will come up against the immutable force of bias, ignorance, and even hatred.

People often tell me, "Rachel is wonderful! She's so interesting!"

I want to say, "OK, *you* try being her mother for a while."

It has been frightening at times and frustrating, but being Rachel's mother has certainly been different.

The Flame Revisited

The Writing Project Ten Years Later

Ten years ago, I became a fanatic. That's right—a complete fanatic.

The Summer Institute at Jacksonville State University whirled me around, bowled me over, and turned me upside down. For the first time, I felt hope that there **was** a way to teach kids how to write, not just to write, but to love writing, to make it feel right and happy and worthwhile. The Writing Project taught me how to do that in my own writing. I thought I might be able to pass that on, to make my composition class a happening place, a creating place, and a sharing place.

And you know what?

I was right. And it's only gotten better over the last ten years. Peer grouping, publishing together, and sharing a life in writing is the next thing to heaven. I used to approach my writing classroom with the grim fatalism of the overseer of a slave galley. After the Summer Institute, I entered class with a bubbling sense of elation and anticipation. What would I discover today? Who would surprise me with an astounding sentence, a developing voice, a sense of writing with a purpose? I can't believe it, but I have sustained that elation over the span of ten years!

Ten years ago, I wrote an article for *The Wit Newsletter* entitled "Carrying the Flame—The National Writing Project at Work in the Classroom." There I wrote about my first semester of utilizing peer grouping in Freshman Composition 101. Re-reading this little piece this week, after ten years of experiencing the writing workshop in my

classes, I was struck with the sheer passion, excitement, dizzy headedness, the blazing elation that leaps off the page. Wow, I thought, how much the Summer Institute affected me! More than any other class I've ever taken! And now, here I am again, an "advanced" fellow (I'm not so sure about that word, "advanced." Am I really ten years older?) But the fire is still there, colleagues. Man, is it ever! These last two weeks have reminded me of that metamorphosis that jolted, rocked, and rolled me in '93.

Peer Grouping

The most important contribution was that the Institute put me in a peer group and I got to experience first-hand the magic of collaborating, the miracle of "publishing." I learned about the almost organic life form that emerges as a group grows and matures. I then learned how to spot a group's growth in my classroom. I watched its genesis, its stages of maturity, and the bond it formed. Groups are really microcosms of life itself. There is birth, celebration, peril, hardship, dry spells, and, yes, sometimes the death of separation (although many groups become lifelong friends and sometimes even marriage partners).

A Typical Day

Here is a sample of my day as a classroom writing teacher.

Most of the time, my students will enter my class to find me writing. I gesture to the board where there are instructions for the day's assignment. My students know to get in their groups and get started. If it is the first day of the workshop, they get out their rough drafts and start reading them to each other.

They generally know not to bother me, for I am a WRITER. That is a distinction in my class. We are special people: we've entered into that other realm—the written word, spilling from our minds to our hands toward the crisp, lined notebook paper. We need to remember that to write is a precious gift, for it is a glimpse into our most special place, our souls. Students need to know that the teacher writes, too, struggles for the word, crosses out, discards. The teacher also says, “I just can't get it down the way I want to!”

Sometimes I join groups, and at first, they don't like that. After a while, though, they know I'm not judging but just in the same boat with them, wrestling with the idea, getting it right. When I know I need to, I circulate from group to group, reacting to questions, directing attention to the usage book, reading the swirl of longhand for coherence. (Writers do so much better when they draft in longhand.) I say, “I trust your judgment” a lot. I encourage autonomy; students should listen to my suggestions and those of the group, but ultimately they have the last say.

I spend a lot of office time with my writers. Last spring, I had eighty-six office visits. I have an agenda for conferences. My office is a mess, but I have plenty of chairs. Students are usually sprawled out everywhere. I like it when we all get involved in a manuscript. Everybody learns. My office is a safe place, a place where someone can confide and share and laugh like a fool. I always ask if the writer has any ongoing problems that we need to address. Then, with the student sitting near and looking at the manuscript with me, I read aloud. Sometimes a student can detect writing errors when he hears his paper read. While I read, I code errors to pages in the usage book. I never write

directly on the written words, for the same reason that I would never trample over someone's ideas and thoughts. I write lightly, in the margin, in pencil. Red ink is ugly, especially if it is bled all over someone's writing. What disrespect!

In my office, we discuss writing, getting it down, making it work, putting it across. We decide that no paper is ever finished, that it will always need revision, that perfection is out of our realm completely. But we learn to deal.

Writers Collaborating

Through a semester, I watch groups bond or not. Ten years ago, I did not consider the possibility that there would sometimes be strife when I put five people together. Although the majority of groups work well together, there have been times in the last twenty semesters that I have encountered baffling symptoms of antisocial behavior. All it takes is one group mate who is a misogynist, a resistant loner, an arrogant brat, a whiner, a liar, and so forth, and you can have disharmony in the land. But, after all, this is real life. We will encounter those types everywhere. I just do my best.

This little memoir would not be complete without giving credit to my hero and mentor, Donald Murray. In *A Writer Teaches Writing*, I found the plan I needed. My scheme came directly out of his book. I simply would have had no place to start without this important explanation of peer grouping on the college level.

And so here I am, ten years after a life-changing, sizzling, hot summer when I studied what I love and do best at the Summer Institute. Ten years from now, I'll be in line again, I suppose. Meanwhile, I'll just keep carrying this flame. Thanks, NWP.

The Persuasive Speech

It is without contradiction that learning persuasive discourse is valuable, but it is perhaps the most difficult of all the forms of public speech. Young speakers are not accustomed to autonomous opinion, and they are sometimes timid to have strong convictions based on their sole analyses. For these reasons, I constructed the following assignment.

My objectives were to provide practice in giving a speech that stressed the logical proof of a proposition, to provide practice in the use of an outline applicable to a wide variety of argumentative speeches, and to improve the ability to detect unsound reasoning and slipshod evidence.

First, I presented a few principles from Aristotle's argumentative rhetoric in *Ars Poetica*. Then we experimented with formulating policy resolutions. I distinguished the difference between policy and values argument. After I distributed a list of possible topics, all requiring a policy to be enacted, we experimented with resolution statements.

Over the next few class periods, my students developed a clear-cut stance on the resolutions they selected, affirmative or negative. I instructed them to find two to four separate sources with only one Internet source allowed. These were to be written down on separate note cards and placed in alphabetical order. After seeing a video of excellent examples made by speakers for the National Forensic League, we discussed our audience. There were our opponents, neutrals, and partisans. The speaker must concentrate on changing the minds of the neutrals first, of course, while making his or her remarks

interesting for the partisans. The opponents? We discussed the unlikelihood of changing their minds for the time being, but we did not want to alienate them, either.

The policy speech is emotional and strongly opinionated. We talked about how important it is to take action, to make the audience imagine themselves doing what is right and moral. Yet we want at the same time to suggest how practical the idea is and how beneficial.

In a policy argument, the need for change must be accompanied by a plan of action. We discussed palatable plans, ones requiring the least effort and using minimum funding. We talked about how the best plans are ones that take money from a non-functioning agency and re-direct it to a more effective agency. Students are baffled at first; they do not realize that, when formulating a policy argument, they have at their disposal almost unlimited power to institute regulations and to mandate allocations of funds in accordance with the laws of the land under the Constitution at the state and federal level. At the same time, these plans must be logical and feasible.

Finally, class presentation began. The speaker was not allowed to have anything other than a note card for a skeletal outline and separate note cards for direct quotations. Quotations were imbedded in explanatory remarks by the speaker and placed in the speech at the appropriate time. Each speaker had to finish by giving the audience a plan of action, a telephone number, an e-mail address, or the names of political representatives. The speakers knew that they had hardened cases of disbelievers in their audience. If they remembered that their major task was to keep their partisans interested,

swing the neutrals into line and not to alienate their opponents, then they had presented a persuasive speech.

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Terrie Turner

He who listens, understands.

West African Proverb

Grass Houses

I am a summer person. I know this to be true because I love all things summer.

Summer to me is homemade ice cream, lightning bugs, freshly-mown grass, chlorinated water, late-night movies, and visiting with relatives. Lately I've been thinking about how different summertime was in my own childhood from that of my children. Before I had kids, I always thought that my children would have exactly the same experiences growing up that I had, but that just hasn't been the way things have turned out. I always envisioned going places and doing things with them that I did as a child. But in reality, their childhood has been much different from the way mine was, thirty-something years ago.

The days that stand out most from my very earliest memories in life are those days that were spent doing simple things, usually at home with my family or sometimes at different places with my extended family. Some memories are funny, some are sad, some are comforting, but all are mine.

One of my favorite things to do when I was about three or four was to follow around behind my mom or dad as they pushed the lawnmower across our backyard. Nowadays, most people don't even own a push mower, and they surely wouldn't let their preschooler follow around behind them as they mowed, but for some reason, that was a fascinating way for me to spend a summer evening. I loved the way the mower made a neat little path through the high grass and the way the grass smelled mixed with the fumes of the gasoline. Then, the day after the grass was cut and had turned to dry, crackly hay, my older sister and I would rake it into little piles which we would then use to build houses. They weren't very big houses, of course, but they were fun to play in. We

mashed piles of hay up between our hands and laid it out in long rows in the yard. Our outer walls might be ten feet long, and inside these, we laid inner walls to make the bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, and living room. The leftover hay was used to make a nice, soft bed, which we covered with our baby doll blankets. These were great fun to lie on, but if that hay ever got down our shirt or shorts, it itched like crazy. Sometimes we got really creative and brought stuff from inside the house to add to our new home. Our mom wasn't crazy about our doing that because all that hay had to be shaken off everything before it was brought back in the house. I'm sure she was usually the one who wound up doing that while my sister and I were splashing around in a bubble bath.

Another time I remember when I was about three or four was riding bicycles with all the neighborhood kids. Although we lived in a rural area outside Florence, we still had plenty of children to play with. Our street was never very busy with traffic, and it seemed that there were always kids riding bikes in the street. One year, Santa brought me a big red tricycle-looking thing called a Delivery Cycle. It had a high seat with one big wheel in the front, and attached to the back was a wagon with two smaller wheels. We had a mimosa tree in our front yard, which grew seedpods every spring. We called them beans, and we picked as many as we could and put them all in the back of my Delivery Cycle. I had such great fun delivering my "beans" to everybody as we played grocery store.

It's funny how many memories a simple thing like a bicycle can evoke. I remember another day when my sister carelessly left her new bicycle in the neighbors' driveway, right behind their big station wagon. While we were playing in the house with her kids, Mrs. McGee decided to run down to the store. Yep! She backed that big ole'

wood-paneled station wagon right over Darlene's bike. Needless to say, it scared Mrs. McGee to death because she thought she had run over a child or a dog or some other living creature. Although she regretted totaling the bicycle, she made sure Darlene understood that it was her fault for leaving it there in the first place. For some reason, the sight of that poor mangled bicycle was like looking at a dead body for me, and I was upset about it for weeks.

Another day, a child was actually struck while riding his bike down the road. It involved my best friend, Wade Gilchrist. Wade lived with his parents and little sister across the street from us in a mobile home, which they eventually traded in for a brick house, the first one on our block. Wade was just my age and size and was the spitting image of Opie Taylor. One hot summer evening, several of us decided to ride all the way down to the end of our street. Cambridge Drive was about a half-mile long and was a great place to ride bikes. As we turned and headed back toward our house, a car drove up behind us. The driver slowed upon seeing us, and we all moved over to the side to let him pass, all of us except Wade. For some reason, he went left, and then I guess he panicked when he realized he was alone on his side of the street. As the car started around us, Wade dashed out in front of it to get over to our side. I don't really remember his being hit, but I remember a man running with Wade in his arms down the street to Wade's parents. Fortunately, a broken arm was his only injury, but boy, we all got a lecture on bicycle safety after that.

Many other memories from my earliest summers include members of my extended family. Dad has two brothers and two sisters, and we all lived in Florence until

my family moved when I was seven. My sister and I, along with our younger cousin Beverly, loved to spend the night at our grandparents' house. Sometimes we'd go over for supper, not planning to spend the night, but we'd talk the adults into it anyway. On those nights, we would get to sleep in one of Papaw's big white undershirts, since we hadn't brought any clothes with us. I can remember jumping on the spare bed at ten o'clock at night having a pillow fight, squealing and screaming at the top of our lungs, and my grandmother only coming in to make sure no one got hurt or to see if we wanted anything else to eat. Aren't grandmas cool?

Often, in the summer, we would go to a cookout or a birthday party at one of my aunts' or uncles' houses. Usually there would be a wading pool for the kids to play in, or we would just run through the sprinkler if it was hot. I learned to love any kind of meat cooked on the grill at those suppers, and homemade ice cream became my passion. My mom has the best recipe for homemade vanilla, and every single gallon I've made as an adult has been made from that very recipe. After supper, as the darkness and dew began to fall, we ran barefoot all over the yard chasing lightning bugs. They made our hands stink when we caught them, but it was so much fun to stand and wait for them to light up under the trees, then try to catch them before they flew out of reach. We would put them in jars, against our parents' wishes, refusing to believe that they would die before dawn, even though they always did. One uncle or another was always happy to punch air holes in the lid for us with his pocketknife.

My mom's family was even larger than my dad's, and they all lived about fifty miles from us, just across the state line in Savannah, Tennessee. There were about ten

grandchildren born within a six-year period in her family, so there was always plenty of noise and excitement when we all got together. My mom was definitely raised a country girl, and my grandparents' five-acre farm seemed like a whole other world. They had a big garden every summer, all kinds of fruit trees, strawberries, and wild grapes, plums and blackberries free for the picking. There was usually some kind of animal that I wouldn't ordinarily get to play with at my house. My grandfather was a carpenter by trade, but he was also an expert fisherman. If he had a spare hour, he was in his boat on the Tennessee River running trotlines. Because of him, another passion of mine is eating fried catfish. He loved to have the whole family over for a fish fry on a Saturday night. A big, black cast-iron kettle hung over a gas flame in the back yard. He filled it with several gallons of cooking oil and got it good and hot. Then he dropped in a pound or two of catfish fillets which my grandmother had battered in a mixture of milk, egg, and cornmeal, frying them to a perfect golden brown. Next, he cooked fries and hushpuppies in the same pot, and we ate until we were stuffed. I remember my mother mashing up my fish between her fingers to make sure there were no bones, then I dipped each bite in ketchup and devoured it. To this day, I can eat more catfish than anyone else at the table.

My mom's oldest brother had four boys, all of whom were older than I, and they taught me a lot about the differences in boys and girls. They were always coming up with imaginative games to play. My granddad had these huge wooden spools that had once held telephone cables or something, and my cousins found endless ways to play with these. While we girls preferred to sit them upright and use them for tables in our playhouses in the woods, the boys thought they were much more fun turned on their sides

and used as a means of transportation. Tim, my tall and skinny tow-headed cousin, could start at one side of the front yard standing upright on the spool and make it all the way to the other side, like a log-rolling champion, without falling off. I would try and try, but could never make it go more than a few feet, probably because the thing weighed more and was taller than I.

Most of my childhood memories are happy ones, and I share them with my children whenever I can. Our imaginations were our greatest toys, and it seemed there were never enough hours in the day to play all the things we dreamed up. My own children, of course, think they have it much better today because they have Playstation, satellite television, Gameboys, and the internet to fritter away the long days of summer. Personally, I'm thankful I grew up when, where, and how I did. I know I'm better for it.

A Swing to Remember

“There are worse things in life to be than a swinger of birches.”-Robert Frost

Ask me where I like to go and relax and I'll probably say, “To the swing in my backyard.” Yes, I know, thirty-seven may seem a little old for swinging to some people, but not to me. Whenever I have an hour or two to kill at home, I like to get a big soft pillow and a good novel and head out to the pecan tree in my backyard. My dear sweet husband bought me the swing I have now one Mother's Day because I told him that was what I wanted. How else would I have gotten one? The only problem was that we didn't have a frame for it, and our back porch just isn't big enough for a swing. So, seeing the great shade our old pecan tree makes in the yard, I decided that was the perfect spot. I bought a heavy-duty rope at Lowe's, and he spent a Saturday afternoon hanging it from a limb high above. Now I can read and sway in the breeze to my heart's content.

I have long had a love affair with swings. It's who I am, I suppose. The very first swing I could call my own was actually a swing set my parents bought for my older sister and me when I was about three. It was the prettiest shade of lime-green and came complete with a teeter-totter, a glider, a metal slide that we loved to lift up and put over the wall of our swimming pool, and two plastic single swings in the middle.

Darlene and I played on that swing for hours, sometimes with other kids in the neighborhood, sometimes together, sometimes alone. I loved the thrill of trying to see over the top of the house as I went higher and higher in my little plastic seat, pumping my legs and pulling on the chains to go faster and faster, then slowing myself down by

grabbing at the dirt below with the toes of my Keds until finally I came to a complete stop.

Another swing from my childhood was the one in my grandparents' backyard. It was a thick, wooden swing painted a cedary-red, and it hung from a strong metal frame painted exactly the same color. It sat under a wild cherry tree and was the preferred spot to entertain company on sunny days. When the adults weren't in it, or sometimes when they were, my cousin Beverly and I liked to climb up either end of the frame and stand with our feet clinging precariously to that thin little bar in the middle. It was on that swing that I learned to "skin a monkey," or hang upside down by my knees from the side bar. I remember trying to be lady-like and keep my shirt from falling over my head as the ends of my hair made little swishing noises in the grass. Invariably my parents would say, "Get down before you fall and break your neck!" One of my favorite pictures of my granddad is of him sitting in that swing in plaid Bermuda shorts and a white undershirt, his arms across the back of the swing, with my sister on one side and me the other, obviously the center of his world. There is a definite look of happiness on his face, and I guess even then, without either of us knowing it, he was teaching me the art of enjoying life. How I miss him.

There were other swings in my childhood as well. My other grandparents lived on a small farm, and what is a farm without a tire swing hanging from a tall oak tree, waiting patiently for anyone to hop on and go for a spin? Swinging on a tire is not as easy as it looks; there is a definite art to it. You have to center yourself perfectly around the rope on top, or you will quickly fall off. Once I mastered sitting upright, I got brave and tried

standing on top of the tire, where it was much easier to steer. We always had to be careful not to bang our head against the tree if we came too close. Underneath the same tree sat another big wooden swing with a metal frame, and another cousin and I often scaled the sides of it on stifling hot summer afternoons. I remember so well a time when Sherron and I must have been about eight or nine years old. It was the 'seventies, and Tanya Tucker was at the pinnacle of her career. We would climb up on top of that frame, hanging on for dear life, sing, "Del-ta-dawn, what's that flower you have on?" at the top of our lungs, and then laugh hysterically at ourselves.

The years rolled by, and my cousins and my friends and I found more exciting ways to pass the time, but I never lost my love for swinging. In fact, when my friends asked me what I wanted for my sixteenth birthday, I said, "A swing." We didn't have one at the time, and I really had been wishing we did so I could relax outside and enjoy the fresh air. Sure enough, three of my best buddies went in together and bought me a nice wooden swing at the hardware store. We have a great picture of me lying in it on top of its cardboard box in my parents' living room floor, surrounded by my friends just after I had opened it. A neighbor heard I was in need of a frame, and he generously donated one his children had long since outgrown. It needed some work, but before long, the swing was hung, and I was in business. The business of relaxing, that is. My parents' yard is full of huge old pine trees that don't make a great shade, but they do make a wonderful sound when the wind blows through their tops. It is such a peaceful, relaxing sound, and I sat for hours after school and in the summer, reading a book, writing in my journal, or just dreaming about the future.

All too quickly those happy, carefree days were over, and I was married with a family and a home of my own. Having children and a career means many new responsibilities as well as pleasures, and my life is not exactly filled with quiet time these days. However, when I do find the time, everyone in my house knows where I'll be: out back in the yard, "justa' swangin'."



Jeff Walls

Music is your own experience, your thoughts,
your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't
come out of your horn.

Charlie Parker

My Beginnings as a Writing Teacher

As I entered the teaching profession seven years ago, I thought my chances of being a successful teacher were better than average. I had always enjoyed reading, so I had never been afraid of writing. I had never thought of myself as being an excellent writer, but I felt that my writing skills would be adequate to assist the writing development of fifth graders.

As I began my first year, I realized immediately that I was totally unprepared to be an effective instructor of writing. I was literally clueless. First of all, I was overwhelmed with the paperwork involved. I remember sitting down with that first stack of essays at the kitchen table. I was ready to practice my skills as the teacher who would make a difference in the writing lives of twenty-five students. I think I threw every one of those papers in the trash. I knew that my students needed to write large amounts to improve their skills, but I was unaware as to how much of this writing I should actually read and what to do with it as I read it. Paperwork, however, was only the beginning of my problem.

I quickly realized that my students were totally unprepared to write. I celebrated the presence of complete sentences. Most of my students were unable to put together a coherent paragraph. I demanded writing from my students, foolishly thinking that practice would make it all better. Surely we could write our way out of this mess. Five paragraphs with five sentences in each paragraph was the standard assignment. That I was spending far more time attempting to grade these papers than my students were putting into them

soon became obvious to me. I finally realized that the instruction of writing was far more complex than I had imagined. So, I did what many teachers in similar situations have done. I assigned very little writing in my classroom. I had no choice. I was beginning to hate writing just as much as my students did. It actually got to the point that we only wrote when we needed to redecorate the classroom or hallway. I was at least going to make others think that I was providing adequate writing instruction to my students.

I realized that I needed help, so I began looking at professional development. I attended a workshop at which I was advised to use the five senses as the focus of my descriptive writing instruction. I thought I had it made now. I was ready to make the big jump to being an effective instructor of writing. I took the five-sense concept back to my classroom with what I now realize was a false sense of security. I introduced this foolproof way of eliciting descriptive writing to my class and sat back. Surely my students would be excellent descriptive writers now. I quickly saw however, that this concept had done nothing more than generate list after list after list. I was still doing nothing to improve the writing skills of my students. I still cringe when I think about those "I hear, I smell, I taste" papers.

I am actually embarrassed now when I see the students who had to write such papers in the hallways of my school. I was so unprepared, and I actually did very little, if anything, to improve their writing abilities. I even failed miserably at conveying the love of writing that I possess. My first attempts at writing instruction are actually laughable now, and I can actually joke about them a little bit. I am just glad that my students were fifth graders and that most of my failure has probably already been forgotten!

Natalie

When I look at you now, three years into this world
I wish I knew exactly what to do

I would share a million books with you, if that was the thing to do
I wish I knew exactly what to do

I want so much for you, for your life to be full of joy
I wish I knew exactly what to do

I would share a million songs with you, if that was the thing to do
I wish I knew exactly what to do

If you could read my mind, you would understand my desire
I wish I knew exactly what to do

I would share a million stories with you, if that was the thing to do
I wish I knew exactly what to do

This thing it drives me crazy, wondering what to do
I wish I knew exactly what to do

I would share a million prayers with you, if that was the thing to do
I wish I knew exactly what to do

I have come to the conclusion that I may never know exactly what to do
So as for now, all I can promise, is that I will share my life with you

And I can only hope and pray that this will be enough for you

The Perfect Place

“Perfect” is a strong word--probably somewhat overused. However, there remains a place in my mind where the word “perfect” actually fits, a place that will always help to define the word “perfect” for me. This is the place where I grew up. This place is my childhood neighborhood.

What makes a childhood neighborhood perfect? I guess one would have to start with the inhabitants. It was a typical middle-class neighborhood--no doctors or lawyers here, just plain working-class people making the best of it in a small southern town. The neighborhood was actually situated on what was then considered the wrong side of the tracks. Why is it that so many small towns such as these were bisected by railroad tracks, and money helped to determine who lived on which side of the tracks? For whatever reason, my life began on what many considered the wrong side, but I will never believe that there was anything wrong about it.

Working-class people filled my neighborhood, and the working-class children were the perfect companions for me. The Howells lived directly behind me. We actually shared back yards, as we shared our adolescent years together. Jimmy and Chris were my two best friends. Jimmy was one year older, and Chris was two years younger than I. Their father changed tires for a living, and their mother was a teacher. When it was time for supper at the Howell house, their father whistled in the voice of a quail. When he whistled this tune, the Howell boys headed home. They lived in a two-bedroom house with one bathroom, sharing their bedrooms and their lives. The two eventually became

known as "Rock Bottom" and "Wormy" respectively. Nicknames are signs of affection, you know, and we all had nicknames.

The Longs lived two houses down from me. Their mother died from cancer when we were all very young. Her death was an early introduction for me to a world that can often be cruel, never taking into consideration which side of the tracks we lived on. Debbie and Linda Gail were there from the beginning. They were close to the rest of us in age. "Debbie Long Legs" and "Linda Bells" lived one house down from me. One day, their father brought home a dune buggy, and from time to time, he loaded it up with the neighborhood kids for rides around the block. I will never, ever, forget my first ride in that dune buggy. I can still see the faces of those two girls through the wide eyes of a twelve-year old boy riding around the block in a fashion he had only dreamed of.

A couple of houses over were the Mansfields: Gerald, Glenn, and Amanda. Gerald was several years older than most of us, but Glenn and Amanda fit right in with regard to age. Glenn was a huge kid, thus the nickname "Big Glenn." He was the first person I ever saw kick a football bare-footed. I was impressed. There was something dark and mysterious about their house, where we were seldom invited in.

Grady Wilkins lived directly across the street from me. Grady was exactly my age, the only child from the neighborhood with whom I often shared classrooms in school. Grady never really fit in for some reason. However, he still had a nickname, "Shady Grady." He became a legend of sorts, though. He ran off and got married in the 9th grade. I think the big thing about Grady was that, at a very early age, he got a mini-bike that he never shared with the other neighborhood kids.

The lives of numerous other children and families touched mine during those years. Some moved in and stayed a couple of years. Some moved in and stayed several years. I remember most of them when I really try. I know for sure that those kids who encountered our little piece of heaven enjoyed their time there; after all, it was perfect.

I guess the one thing that really helped to make our neighborhood perfect was the shared love of sports. To say that we played would be like saying Hitler dictated. Dusk to dawn, we played ball. Weather was never a concern. The only rainouts we ever suffered were the rainouts imposed by our parents. As a result, we all became better than average athletes. Our neighborhood became known as the place to visit if one wanted to get into a good pick-up game. In the summer, we played baseball. In the fall, we played football. We played basketball continuously.

The basketball courts were sacred to us. In the beginning, there was only one, which happened to be in my backyard. Our backboard was a piece of plywood nailed to the top of a garage. The rim was never securely attached with the proper tools. We would often climb to the top of the garage and, using a hammer and nails, re-fasten the rim to the plywood. We often joked that it helped our shooting. The court was situated under several huge pine trees, which was actually a good thing. These trees provided us with welcome shade in the summer. In addition, when we raked the straw we could fashion the court into a perfect square using the swept-up straw as a boundary. To this day, when I rake pine straw, I am reminded of those carefree days when we manicured our basketball court. In the wintertime, we raked away snow in the same fashion, putting on gloves when we could find them and playing until our parents forced us into the warmth of our

small frame homes. We were close, and we were tough. We all became excellent basketball players as a result of these pursuits. Jimmy actually signed a basketball scholarship with Tennessee Tech. Chris and I both went on to play on excellent high school teams.

We played other sports with similar gusto. There was a park across the street from my house where we often played our baseball games. It takes many people to play a real baseball game, so we would often make up our own rules. If a fielder could get the ball back to the pitcher before the batter got to first base, it was considered an out. My father actually came down and played with us one day. I was amazed, so amazed that I can still remember what he wore that day. My father did not play anything with me very often.

We played the vast majority of our football games in the street in front of my house. When there were only five or six people playing, we did not need that much room. In addition, we were always closer to a water hose that could provide us with a gulp of water when we needed it. In our version of the game, two complete passes made a first down. Telephone poles doubled as end zone markers while the curbs provided easily identifiable sidelines. These times in the street actually helped to bring our neighborhood closer. Cars always had to stop for us, and we actually touched the cars as they passed by, forever connecting ourselves to the occupants. We were always aware of the time by taking note of who was interrupting our game. People had schedules. People came home from work at the same time, and when they got home, they stayed home. They shared their meals at home. There was not all this running around that people have become accustomed to today.

Another thing that helped to make our neighborhood perfect was its proximity to the Recreation Department. It was a five-minute bicycle ride, and it was all downhill. This is where we spent countless hours, where we were introduced to the world of organized sports. The kids of the neighborhood competed against each other and with each other. As competitors, we never talked much about outcomes; however, the entire neighborhood was always aware of who had beaten whom and who had been the victim of another's curve ball. Virtually all of our summer days were spent there. These summer time bike rides to the "Rec" were glorious and carefree. We played basketball in the morning. We frolicked in the pool when we needed to cool off. We gawked at the female lifeguards in the afternoon. Little League games occupied our nights. All of this occurred within shouting distance of the safety and security of our own beds.

The trips to and from the "Rec" in the summertime were especially memorable due to two factors. Our neighborhood consisted of one giant block with three streets running parallel through the block. To get to the "Rec," we had to cross the lower boundary of homes, which meant we had to pick the yard through which to make this crossing. Many routes were tried with special attention always being paid to things such as dogs, fences, dirty looks, and the ability to make the crossing without having to slow our bikes down. We finally settled on a path that seemed acceptable to everyone. There was no fence, and a path enabled us to cross the boundary without slowing down. The path was beside a little white duplex, and one day, a man who we heard was a pilot moved in along with his wife. The wife liked to get a suntan in the summertime. Who

were we to argue? We were well aware of the "Pilot's Wife" many years before Oprah read the book.

The second factor had to do with our departure at night. A softball field was situated very close to the duplex of the pilot and his sun-worshipping wife. Foul balls and home runs were common in slow pitch softball, and if we played our cards just right, we could almost always return home with a softball. "Rec" etiquette called for the proper return of these balls, but I never said that we were perfect, only the neighborhood.

The "Rec" was our home away from our home, a place where everybody knew our names. Many childhood firsts occurred here--holding hands with the opposite sex, homeruns, touchdowns, chasing a greased pig on the fourth of July and seeing our first fireworks on the same day. It was just another part of our neighborhood. It helped to define my youth and fill my heart with a lifetime of memories.

My childhood neighborhood is not the same any more. Woodland Heights is no longer what it used to be. My family no longer owns a house in the neighborhood. However, I still drive through the old neighborhood occasionally, and when I do, I can still hear the sounds of footballs being kicked, basketballs being dribbled, and stories being shared. And when I take the time to listen really closely, I can hear the distant whistle of a quail and perfection being defined.



Lisa Williams

"Why write?
To be surprised."

Donald Murray

Jacksonville State University Writing Project

Talking Points for Teacher-Consultants

What is the Jacksonville State University Writing Project?

The Jacksonville State University Writing Project, part of the Alabama Writing Project and the National Writing Project, is a university-school collaboration working to improve student writing by improving the teaching of writing in Northeast Alabama schools. Since writing is fundamental in all learning, teachers from across the grades and across the curriculum participate in programs offered by the JSU Writing Project.

What does the JSU Writing Project do?

Using a teachers-teaching-teachers model, the JSU Writing Project brings together successful writing teachers from across the grades and the curriculum for an invitational summer institute. In the institute, teachers examine their classroom practice, conduct research, and develop their own writing and presenting skills. During the school year, these teachers provide professional development workshops for other teachers in their schools and assist with other programs offered by the JSU Writing Project.

How does the JSU Writing Project Summer Institute benefit participants?

In addition to the opportunity to share ideas with other teachers, write, and refresh knowledge of research and practice in the teaching of writing, teachers chosen for the summer institute receive a \$1000 stipend for their participation. Since the summer institute is offered as either 6 hours of graduate credit (EH 551, EH 552) or Continuing

Education Units, teachers can move toward an advanced degree or meet professional development requirements. Additionally, the JSU Writing Project serves as a “professional home” for its alumni to return for participation in an array of continuity programs that help them continue to grow and accept new leadership roles along the continuum of their careers.

What kinds of programs does the JSU Writing Project offer?

In addition to the Summer Institute, the JSU Writing Project provides a variety of programs to serve the needs of teachers and students in Alabama schools.

- Inservice workshops on writing and reading
- Teacher research groups
- Professional reading groups in local schools
- Writing groups
- National Board Certification workshops
- Language Arts Olympiad competition for middle school students, plus other student programs
- The Writing Instruction Technology Newsletter, featuring articles on the teaching of writing, mailed free of charge to 3600 Alabama teachers
- Conferences bringing nationally recognized scholars in literacy to Alabama

Is the JSU Writing Project cost-effective?

The JSU Writing Project has an appropriation from the State of Alabama and

receives support from Jacksonville State University. This funding is leveraged by federal matching funding from the National Writing Project Corporation, bringing \$28,000 in federal matching funding to Alabama in FY 2002-2003, thus doubling Alabama's investment in writing improvement. For FY 2003-2004, the project will receive \$38,000 in federal matching funding.

With this funding last year, the JSU Writing Project provided 35 programs, with over 400 teachers participating for over 6000 contact hours, at a cost under \$6.00 per contact hour.

Is the JSU Writing Project successful?

Independent evaluation of the JSU Writing Project in 2002 by Inverness Associates, Inverness, California, revealed 100% participant satisfaction with the Summer Institute, with teachers finding "the overall quality of the institute to be excellent." Local evaluation studies point to gains in reading and writing scores in the classrooms of Writing Project teachers. Additionally, in the last 15 years, over 200 teachers have participated in JSU Writing Project Summer Institutes, and several thousand more have participated in other activities of the JSU Writing Project.

Why should Alabama continue to invest in improving the teaching of writing?

For success in today's information-driven economy, young people must be able to write and communicate effectively in both academic and workplace settings. Writing Project teachers use more effective teaching approaches, spend more time on writing

instruction, and help students improve their writing performance, making Alabama's investment in the JSU Writing Project a sound one.

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Shalonda Williams

Put your ear down close to your soul and
listen hard.

Anne Sexton

A

A is for apples. I just love the smell of fresh apples. The aroma of apples reminds me of the smell of my grandmother's house. My grandmother would use fresh, hand-picked apples to prepare piping hot homemade apple pie. The pie would be so delicious. All the neighbors would come over for some of my grandmother's apple pie.

B

B is for books. Reading books has been of my favorite pastimes. I have always wanted to read since I was three years old. I remember my father reading stories to me at bedtime. I remember reading stories to my brother when he would cry. I enjoy stories of romance and suspense.

C

C is for cooking. I really like to cook. It is not always the best tasting food in the world, but I like to think that I have done a good job. My son says that I need to get rid of the cookbook and just take some lessons. He says that the food might taste better if I just had a little instruction. My mom says that it all has to do with the seasoning of the food. I think that she might be right.

D

D is for dogs. I have three of the most adorable pets in the world. My dogs are named Dibels, Sheba, and Solomon. Their breeds are Pekinese and Siberian Huskies. I love my dogs because they not only give a sense of security, but they are very loving. It brings me joy to see their faces each day when I come home. They are always happy to see me. No matter how hard the day has been, my dogs greet me with love and joy.

E

E is for Easter eggs. When I think of bright, vibrant colors, I think of Easter eggs. I can remember getting all dolled up in a new Easter outfit and running through fields to hunt Easter eggs. I can also remember eating dinner in a slip because mother did not want me to get food on my new dress. Easter would be my second favorite holiday next to Christmas.

It's not goodbye, it's see you later!

I was in so much pain when you went away,

My love has grown greater every second, minute, and hour of each day.

Your touch, your love,

I can't forget.

I will forever remember when we first met.

You were so shy.

I was, too.

I have faith our love will see us through.

I pray, and pray, and pray each day,

My love will help you find your way.

I love you so,

I miss you much,

Your return will be the perfect touch.

It's not goodbye, it's see you later.

Our love can only become much greater.

Journals Writing: The Effects of Student Achievement

Do you want your children's vocabulary, reading comprehension, math skills, and socialization skills to increase dramatically? Journal writing can help. Journal writing allows students to become actively involved in the learning process (Fletcher 1993). Journal writing provides a way for students to express themselves more freely (Routham 1991). Additionally, journals can be used as a tool to check for student understanding.

Journals are very versatile and can be incorporated into any subject area (Lindsey 2002). In reading, journals can be used to help build a student's vocabulary. My first grade class makes use of the word wall to expand vocabulary when writing in their journals. The more the exposure to the word through writing, the more the students build their vocabulary skills (Bromley 1993). Once students learn the definition of a word, they will feel more comfortable using the word in their reading and writing. While teaching the writing strategies, I encourage my children to use dictionaries and thesauruses. By using reference books, your students develop a wide range of conversational skills. The students' terminology will begin to grow at an enormous rate as they begin to use more vivid adjectives and adverbs in their daily conversations. I have noticed a definite improvement in students' oral and writing skills since incorporating journal writing into my daily lesson plans.

Like most educators, I am constantly searching for ways to increase my students' reading comprehension skills. Reading comprehension is usually the hardest thing to develop in young students. What better way to teach children than by using their own work samples? Journals can help the students develop an understanding of difficult

concepts. When a new concept is introduced, students could write to the teacher or to another peer, explaining the concept. Children usually learn more by peer tutoring and mentoring, and journaling allows children the opportunity to ask each other about the what, when, where, why, and who while reading and editing each other's work (Zinsser 1985). Interactive journals encourage students to show off their work to others. Students are more eager to write because they can write about topics that interest them. Journals are used in literature circles, for debates, and to persuade or express an opinion.

Journals may also be used with daily math activities. Since students use procedures needed to solve mathematical problems, journals may be used to check for understanding of the procedures needed to solve the problem. Teachers can easily identify and correct problems found in writing or comprehension. The responses in journals are personal and non-threatening to students.

Journal writing allows children to develop socially, academically, and intellectually (Borders & Paisely 1992). In many cases, children are not allowed to express their individual feelings, which hinders a quiet child's intellectual growth. Allowing a quiet child to write his inner feelings will promote positive self-esteem. Bibliotherapy helps individuals solve problems through their response to literature (Bodart 1980) and is effective for attitude changes, mental health, self-concept development, and fear reduction (Schrack 1982). Bibliotherapy has been shown to have positive effects on students' problem solving ability, prosocial behavior, values of development, interpersonal relationships, acceptance of people different from themselves, and reading

achievement (Cornett & Cornett 1980). Responding to literature through journal writing will give each child in our classrooms motivation.

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The Conspiracy of Ignorance: Thoughts on the Failure of American Public Schools

In Martin Gross' book, *The Conspiracy of Ignorance: The Failure of American Public Schools*, there are vivid examples of reasons why American schools have failed their students. He states that the results of a national test were very discouraging in the area of reading. He believes that inferior teachers and a "watered down" curriculum are to blame. Mr. Gross evaluates the differences between public and private schools. He also discusses his opinion of a national teacher union. Educators are all aware of these situations, but we are afraid to discuss them. I believe that educators are often fighting a losing battle in an attempt to educate our students. Students, parents, and some teachers have lost the value of an appropriate education. Reading this book has enabled me to re-evaluate my teaching strategies.

Mr. Gross characterizes the modern-day teacher to be inferior to all other degreed professionals. In his opinion, teachers receive the least amount of education to receive a degree. In my opinion, a quality education is built from attentive students, highly trained teachers, concerned parents, and effective administrators. Teachers should not shoulder the blame alone. Teaching should be considered the best profession in the world. Teachers provide students with a foundation to become doctors, lawyers, and financial consultants. In my opinion, I inspire young minds to do their best to achieve a successful career. My colleagues and I are always attending workshops and continuing our education through graduate coursework. Teachers are faced with an ongoing process of professional development. The main reason I continue my education is to learn new and effective ways to teach my students. The pay increase is also a great incentive to continue my

professional growth in education.

Mr. Gross elaborates on the design of the curriculum. Mr. Gross explains that reading is the most important subject, but its teaching has many deficiencies. In Mr. Gross' opinion, the problem is a result of the first three grades of school. I agree with his views. I feel that a student must receive a good foundation of phonics. In my opinion, it is important to teach reading skills in a sequence. Reading must be taught on the appropriate grade level for students. I feel that once students grasp the knowledge of sound and letter recognition, they will be successful readers. Although whole language connects reading and writing, phonemic awareness works more effectively to me. In my first grade classroom, phonemic awareness and concepts of print are taught throughout the school year.

Mr. Gross states that in most areas of the world, entering into the teaching profession is easy. Any person could simply take a course and become a certified teacher in other parts of the world. I feel that a teacher should master a teacher assessment before receiving a license. Other professions require an assessment to evaluate the expertise of the practitioner. I would not want a doctor to operate on me without an appropriate certification in the medical field. Parents like to know that their child's teacher is well qualified. My school system encourages teachers to provide each parent with a complete autobiography of professional certifications.

Some parents prefer private and charter schools over public schools because of smaller teacher/student ratio and higher test scores. Mr. Gross makes a makes a good point with his description of private schools. Private schools may achieve higher test

scores because they don't tolerate incompetence and disobedience. In my opinion, public school teachers must deal with all the adversities of disciplining students. Private schools, however, have the opportunities to dismiss students who don't meet their standards. Charter schools are often developed from an educational theory and can be closed if they fail to comply with the theory. In my opinion, charter schools may not be an effective source of education because of the lack of financial assistance. Charter schools are usually funded with vouchers based on economical resources.

Mr. Gross expresses a need to pay a larger salary to middle and high school teachers than to elementary teachers. I totally disagree. I feel that the elementary teachers should receive a higher salary. The elementary teachers have to teach students manners, social skills, rules, and appropriate behaviors for school. Elementary teachers must also teach study habits. Elementary teachers have to motivate the students to learn. Middle and high school students would be lost without an elementary school background.

I feel that it is important to belong to a professional teacher organization. All teachers need to feel that they belong to a group who understands their concerns, so I disagree with Mr. Gross' criticisms of the National Education Association. I do not always agree with their views, but they fight for teacher rights. I like this organization because it fights for our medical insurance and pay increases.

Administrators, teachers, parents, and the community must all work for the good of the students. We must all come together to decide the best interest of the students. We have to learn to set aside our pride and work for the students. We need effective leaders to find strategies to help teachers. I feel that administrators need to support teachers, and

parents need to reinforce strategies at home. The schools need community leaders to become mentors for the students. Everyone working together will improve the level of education in America. There is an old African proverb that states, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." I strongly believe that proverb is true.

In conclusion, I feel that there is no "cure all" to solve all our educational problems. I feel that there is a great need of improvement in the public schools. For our schools to improve, we must become willing to change. Most people are afraid of change. We know what the problems are, but what are we doing to correct it? I really enjoyed reading this book. It would be a great source of professional development for people who work in the field of education.

Shelton, Rick. *Write Where You Are: Strategies for Teaching Four Modes of Writing*.
Hoover: Minuteman Press, 2002.

Rick Shelton's *Write Where You Are* is a book that targets the teaching of the four modes of writing: narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive. The first three chapters of the book focus on teaching educators how to reach the potential of all young writers. Shelton focuses on the importance of modeling, talking about writing, and teaching grammar within the context of writing. In the next four chapters, he spends a great deal of time breaking apart each mode and explaining its most important components. He discusses the "show, don't tell" philosophy as well as how to avoid "the block" by using the five-paragraph essay. He uses terminology such as the "second hole" rule to teach writers not to give away any of their best information until the second hole on their paper. In addition, he also talks about "baking the cake," a strategy that helps students organize a five-paragraph essay. Not only does Shelton "tell" us what works, but he also "shows" us by including examples of what not to do, as well as what a well-developed essay should look like. Moreover, he also provides teachers with quick lessons to enhance the writing of students. Finally, Shelton provides an eye-opening experience for teachers of writing, forcing them to reflect on their teaching, a skill many educators do not practice often enough.

Lorrie Cooper

Gunnery, Sylvia. *Just Write! Ten Practical Workshops for Successful Student Writing*.
Ontario, Canada: Pembroke Publishers Limited, 1998.

Just Write! gives any writing teacher successful creative ideas to help students with the various genres and processes of writing. The book offers ten professionally proven workshops to use in the classroom to aid students in their prewriting, revision, and final copy stages of writing. Student examples are given to show the progress of the students' writings with usage of these workshops. Gunnery also allows the reader access into the minds of the students and their opinions of the various activities by using student comments about her classroom. Sylvia nudges educators to take the role as a "guide," not teacher. Teachers should urge one-on-one exchanges between themselves and the students, advising their students with their writing problems, not telling them what is right or wrong. Throughout each writing activity included in this book, from "Freefall Into Writing" to "Curtains Up!", Sylvia Gunnery's theme is apparent: allowing the student to experience what they are writing about is crucial. Don't just tell the reader how it felt; show it in your writing.

Nia Cox

Padgett, Ron, ed. *Handbook of Poetic Forms*. New York: Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1987.

Mr. Padgett has compiled seventy-five different poetic forms into this book. He fully describes each poetic form and supplies an example. In many cases, stressed and unstressed syllables accompany the form. He reminds us of classical poetry, such as epics, sonnets, and ballads. Mr. Padgett also provides new and sometimes underused forms: rap and chants. This book gives teachers a treasure chest of new ways to inspire students to write poetry.

Gregory Deupree

Bryan, Gregory, George Chilcoat, and Timothy Morrison. "Using Student-Generated Comic Books in the Classroom." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 45.8 (2002): 758-767.

"Using Student-Generated Comic Books in the Classroom," is an impressive article written about how students can learn information in any classroom by generating a comic strip. The article details the history of comic books and explains some of the controversy involving comic strips. Bryan, Chilcoat, and Morrison explain that there are many stereotypes in daily comic strips and cartoons because of the 1970's comics that portray a risqué way of life. They also explain that many students read comic strips and cartoons because they are intrigued not only by the words but by the pictures. The comic strips that a teacher has a student write are based on the material in the subject they are studying. While reading the article, one will find research-based studies that show how students learn through reading comic strips. The authors explain how the use of comic strips enhances instruction in comprehension strategies: drawing pictures that relate to the subject matter, using their own words to write about the topic, and using their own creativity to teach themselves about the subject. The article states five main advantages of using comic strip writing in the classroom. The article continues by discussing in detail how to use comic strip construction and gives explicit directions the students must follow. The authors do a wonderful job of explaining the layout of a comic strip and how each step is of its own importance. Finally, the article provides a student example to show how the activity can be used in any classroom.

Rhonda Duncan

Dillon, George L. *Language Processing and the Reading of Literature: Toward a Model of Comprehension*. Bloomington and London: Indiana UP, 1978.

One learns about one's writing by knowing what components of style shape the particularities of a personal voice. This study is grounded in a generative grammar approach to examining unique phrasing in great literature. As such, it is not specifically a

text for the composition class, yet it does help the professor of literature to make connections between how we need a consciousness of sentence construction when we read literature and, by extension, how we convey good practices in composing and revision. Dillon weights various tactics that writers use toward examples from Milton, Faulkner, Wordsworth and Henry James. He divides his coverage into six major chapters that examine specifics of a complex unit of thought and a final chapter, "Some Values of Complex Processing." The early chapters, "Phrases and Their Functions," "Clause Boundaries," "Reference, Coreference, and Attachment," examine the variety of issues that show the dense clause-connection processing of poetic language when, for instance, Milton and others of his age employed the semi-colon not only to separate independent clauses, but to connect a subordinate phrase to its clause. In Chapter Five, Dillon examines the "Consciousness of Sentence Structure" in five writers: Spenser, Wordsworth, Faulkner, James, Stevens. Concluding chapters remind us how such unique turns of phrase as epic similes and conditionals work. In "Values of Complex Processing," Dillon demonstrates how a writer suspends a main clause and interrupts with qualifying information. A useful index of passages cited, along with the traditional bibliography and endnotes, makes the book more usable.

Joanne Gates

Power, Brenda Miller, and Ruth Shagoury Hubbard, eds. *Oops: What We Learn When Our Teaching Fails*. York, MN: Stenhouse Publishers, 1996

Just as the title suggests, this book contains several articles describing what teachers learn when their teaching fails. For example, in "Motivating Alison with a Challenge: A Tale of Two Students," Herman Weller tells how he learned that what teachers think might motivate their students often doesn't. Teachers need to discover what interests their students and to meet them on their own level. Kimberly Campbell's article, "You Can't Always Judge a New Book by Its Cover," tells how her literary circles only work when students are able to choose what they want to read—not just what is available. Jane Townsend, in her article entitled "It Silly 'Cuz It Silly: A Story of Beginning to Teach" describes the time when she decided to use music to teach a lesson on persuasion. Unfortunately, she chose a song pertinent to her—not to her students. Over and over again, these articles point out that teachers must know their students' interests and their level so teaching methods can be modified accordingly.

Carol Hoggle

Burke, Jim. *Tools for Thought: Graphic Organizers for Your Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.

Jim Burke's latest book contains a plethora of graphic organizers for teachers to use in classrooms in all disciplines. The organizers include a number to assist students to

become better notetakers. These include "Episodic Notes," "Decision Trees," and "Pyramid Notes." Other organizers, such as "Summary Notes," "Summary Sheets," and "Synthesis Notes," help students to master the analysis and synthesis levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. He includes ways to use Venn Diagrams, Timelines, Literature Circles, and other graphic organizers to enable students to better grasp history, all kinds of literature, science, and other subjects. The best part of the book is that Burke gives teachers permission to reproduce all the organizers for classroom use. This book is a must-have for teachers who want their students to attain a better grasp of classroom materials, for it is cross-disciplinary and considers all types of learners.

Gloria Horton

Martin, Bill. "A Writing Assignment/A Way of Life." *English Journal*. 92. (July 2003): 52-56.

Bill Martin has a way of improving his students' writing as well as making his students reflect on everyday occurrences in their lives. He calls these papers "Occasional Papers." His students are required to read at least one "Occasional Paper" every six weeks. These papers may be about anything that has recently taken place in a student's life. One student wrote about winking. These papers are not graded for content. The students get a grade for writing the paper and reading it to the rest of the class. Martin helps his students get an idea about what these papers are by reading a few of his own Occasional Papers at the beginning of the school year. He has had a lot of success with these papers. Even after students leave his class, they will continue writing Occasional Papers, just for enjoyment. These papers are also a way to open up discussion in the classroom. The key thing to remember is that negative comments are not allowed. Martin believes that there is always something to write about. His students just have to learn to see what is going on around them. Occasional Papers give his students a way to write about everyday occurrences without the fear of the writing being "bled" all over by the teacher.

LeAnne Jenkins

Booth, David and Moore, Bill. *Poems Please!* Ontario, Canada: Pembroke Publishers Limited, 1988.

Children grow through poetry. This is the major theme presented in this enlightening book. The authors explain that poems work as all artistic experiences do—cognitively and emotionally at one time. Booth and Moore also give excellent examples of ways poems can give us entry points into every field of learning. The information shared helps teachers realize that poems form complete educational packages of their own and touch on all areas of curriculum.

Elizabeth Johnson

Rigney, Barbara H. "Mothering Across Cultures: Postcolonial Representations/Writing Across Cultures: Gender Politics and Difference in the Fiction of Buchi Emecheta. *Research in African Literatures* 34.3 (Fall 2003): 188-190.

Rigney analyzes feminist literature written by Angelita Reyes and Omar Sougou. "To write is to mother, teach language, and bridge boundaries," according to Rigney. She not only explores feminism but also discusses culture. Women/Mothers pass culture down to children. Rigney also stated, "Women of all cultures possess an almost mystical power of communication." Rigney analyzes literature from African American writers, as well as cross-cultural writers.

Amy Kelley

Jensen, George H. and John K. DiTiberio. "Extroversion- Introversion and Writing Processes." *Personality and the Teaching of Composition*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1989. 33-75.

Reading this article about students' writing processes validates the notion that some format must exist for composition teachers. Teaching and writing styles differ among people, but students should have a sound basis for what is expected of them in essays. Jensen and DiTiberio acknowledge the five-paragraph essay as a good way to introduce students to the writing process. Writing styles will always differ, and students may adapt this format to meet their individual needs, but this rudimentary essay style is necessary because it is likely that regardless of the class design, some students will find it necessary to have a guideline to refer back to in their writing. Students have different methods of accomplishing writing: some may pre-write; some may cluster or brainstorm; some may find outlining necessary; and other may develop writer's block as a result of being told that an outline is a requirement; therefore, the five-paragraph essay is a good way to explain what an instructor is looking for in a finished product, without infringing upon a student's method of writing or hindering them from completing the ultimate task assigned.

Alaina Lett

Claggett, Fran, and Joan Brown. *Drawing Your Own Conclusions: Graphic Strategies for Reading, Writing, and Thinking*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992.

The use of graphic strategies (drawing what you read) is the focus of this book. Graphic strategies are valuable tools used to aid students in the process of making meaning as they read, write, and act. The goal of these strategies is that students use all four learning functions instead of the standard function used in the classroom, analysis. The four learning functions are analysis, observation, imagination, and feeling. Most

importantly, the use of graphic strategies teaches students to think metaphorically, therefore, allowing them to make connections in their minds.

Melissa Marsh

Sobel, Taylor, and Anderson. "Shared Accountability: Encouraging Diversity-Responsive Teaching in Inclusive Contexts." *Council for Exceptional Children Teaching Exceptional Children* 35.6 (July/ August 2003): 46-54.

This article focuses on the shared responsibilities of those who are involved in working with an inclusive classroom. The article establishes phases which the post-secondary programs can implement to help their graduates better prepare for a career in public education. The main focus is developing an observation tool to document classroom diversity. If the universities work toward teaching inclusive practices similar to each other and teach pre-service teachers to self-evaluate, the programs will become more consistent. They state that the classroom diversity is a major issue that is the responsibility of universities and public schools. With training and improved mentoring programs, diversity-responsive teaching can occur.

Heather Mitchell

Gillard, Marni. *Story Teller Story Teacher*. Stenhouse Publishers. York: MN, 1996.

This book was very inspiring, and can be used for any age group. Marni Gillard is a former classroom teacher turned storyteller. She has found that using storytelling with the reluctant writer and reader turns that reluctant attitude into an "I can" disposition. She states, "Among my students, the ones most often at ease and most imaginative as tellers are those who have not had an easy time with reading and writing. When it dawns on them that they can get class credit for telling a story, something at which they sense their natural competence, they are elated. Again and again I've seen struggling students excel at story telling and later walk into reading and writing a little less reluctantly because telling honored their ability to talk (12-13)."

Gillard believes that the "casual" tale-telling the first day also establishes that talk is the foundation on which literacy is built. She said she always opened her classes with tale-telling because it helped her students to elicit their own story experiences.

Cathy Noye

Grierson, Sirpa T. "Circling through Text: Teaching Research through Multigenre Writing." *English Journal* 89 (1999): 51-55.

Grierson presented an unusual method for research, insisting that "Multigenre writing has become a powerful complement to the traditional research paper, allowing my

students to develop the discipline of organizing their thoughts." Multigenre writing is a series of individual writings called "crots" that appear in a variety of forms: poetry, prose, drama, exposition, etc. Each crot is a self-contained written work that interacts with the others to present different aspects or viewpoints of a work of literature. It is left up to the student to decide how to organize the crots and present his/her paper.

Lori H. Shaffer

Phenix, Jo. *Teaching Writing, The Nuts and Bolts of Running a Day-to-Day Writing Program*. Ontario: Pembroke, 1990.

The only word that could describe this book is "wow"! The author makes good on her claim in the title. The excellent aspect of this book is that it is so versatile in its age application. She writes about younger children, but every concept could be applied to freshmen in college all the way to post-graduate students. One particularly good idea is Phenix's use of the portfolio. Students file their papers in a loose-leaf notebook labeled for brainstorming, discarded papers, lists, brainstorming, revisions in progress, potential topics and finalized drafts. The book is outstanding.

Janet L. Smart

Burke, Jim. "Ethics and the Study of English." *The English Teacher's Companion*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1999. 255-260.

Burke begins this chapter of his intriguing book by noting that a major difference in the world our students live in today and the one in which we grew up is that too many children do not have "caring, involved parents who have the time to teach them how to live in the world." He feels that the English classroom, in particular, is the only forum many students have in which to discuss values, ethics, and morality. He lists several factors that make the need for ethics lessons in our schools apparent and reminds teachers that most kids live remarkably isolated lives, being "raised by appliances." While Burke admits that simple discussion does not necessarily change anything, he proposes that using literature to allow students to see through the eyes of others can help them develop the habit of asking themselves important questions. More so than any other subject, the English curriculum lends itself to conversations and studies into moral issues that arise within the context of characters' lives. Such conversations bring more understanding into the world. Burke ends the chapter by listing several ways teachers can approach discussions about ethics and morality, such as looking into moral codes and dilemmas, examining quotations and film excerpts, and by writing editorials.

Terrie L. Turner

Lane, Barry. *After the End: Teaching and Learning Creative Revision*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1993.

This book urges teachers to change the focus in their classrooms. Lane argues persuasively that writing IS revision and provides techniques and examples of how to help students realize the creative possibilities of revision. Lane's book is packed full of ideas for those who wish to find a way to make writing (especially revision) fun for students. The book addresses everything from voice and tone to conferencing and questioning in an effort to provide true ownership to the students.

Jeff Walls

Wong, B.Y., Kuperis, S., Jamieson, D., Keller, L., & Cull-Hewitt, R. "Effects of guided journal writing on students' story understanding." *Journal of Educational Research* 95 (2002):179-191.

Teachers want to gain greater understanding of comprehension through journal writing activities. Researchers will eagerly investigate the effects of guided journal writing through the understanding of themes and main characters. This article describes ways in which teachers may investigate their students' understanding of the themes and characters in F.Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The teachers are also interested in resolving the students' understanding of story structure. The researchers predict that the students in the two writing conditions of character clues and general response questions would show more improvement in the no-writing condition in the two given posttests.

The students were assessed by their understanding of the relationship between the main characters, thematic understanding, and a five point self-rating form. The materials used included *The Great Gatsby*, question frames for guided journal writing, posttests, and student self-rating form. Data from student self-rating and qualitative data from student interviews complemented data from quantitative analyses. The results of the two posttests showed consistently that students who wrote guided response journals gave superior test performances opposed to students who did not keep a journal. Analyses from interviews state that guided journal writing may have enhanced literature learning. Any form of journal writing can improve the ability level of a student's performance.

Shalonda Williams